

Metra ON THE BI-LEVEL

Commuter Newsletter, October 2008



Doris is re-elected chairman

Downers Grove resident Carole Doris, who became just the second Metra chairman in the commuter railroad's 24-year history in August 2006, was re-elected to a new four-year term.

The Board also selected a full slate of officers during its August meeting, including appointing Lonnie Hill of Country Club Hills as vice chairman.

Upon accepting her leadership position again, Doris said it has been a privilege to work with the members of the Metra Board.

"I am truly fortunate to work with such talented and experienced people," she said. "While we come to our decisions from different perspectives and professional experiences, our efforts have been coordinated and unified."

The agency's biggest challenge remains lobbying state leaders for capital funding. In recent years, Metra has needed to borrow from capital funding sources to pay for day-to-day operations.

Over the past three years, Metra has diverted \$135 million in capital funding to cover operating expenses.

Rounding out the board's new list of officers is Larry Huggins of Chicago, who was named treasurer, and Arlington Heights Mayor Arlene Mulder, who was named secretary.



The unusual groundbreaking for the MetraMarket last month featured U.S. Equities Realty Chairman Robert Wislow, Metra Chairman Carole Doris and others pulling a window frame out of an exterior wall.

Work begins on MetraMarket

You're dashing for your train when suddenly you're gripped by the aroma of freshly baked bread, lured by the vivid colors of produce and flowers, charmed by the spiels of a dozen or so vendors selling gourmet food.

Do you keep running, or do you give in to temptation and take a little detour?

Thousands of Metra passengers will face that choice next summer, when the new MetraMarket opens at the Ogilvie Transportation Center. Work began last month on the \$43 million project, which will transform a dreary two-block stretch into to a vibrant shop-

ping and dining hub for Metra riders, downtown workers, West Loop neighborhood residents and tourists.

The development will feature a French Market, a CVS pharmacy and a variety of unique restaurants, bars, boutiques and retail stores. The street-level project is replacing a nondescript storage facility under the train platforms and along the commuter concourse at Ogilvie in a two-block area bounded by Clinton, Canal, Washington and Lake streets.

The market is being built for Metra by U.S. Equities Realty, which is funding construction with a \$25 million loan and \$12

million in tax-increment financing. Metra is contributing \$6 million for structural improvements, work that would need to be done even without the market project. The development is expected to generate \$38 million to \$40 million in profits for Metra over the next 25 years.

"Metra and other transit agencies across the country are facing difficult financial times," said Phil Pagano, executive director of Metra. "This project is a profound example of working together with our business partners and community leaders to generate non-fare revenue.

(Continued on Page 2)



ON THE BI-LEVEL

Published by Metra's Media Relations Department and distributed on all Metra lines. Send letters, questions, or any feedback to On the Bi-Level, Metra, 547 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill., 60661-5717. Or e-mail onthebilevel@metrarr.com.

We cannot 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 letters for length and grammar.

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Lonnie W. Hill
Vice Chairman
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Larry Huggins
Treasurer
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Secretary
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Jack Schaffer
Director
Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties

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Director
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Philip A. Pagano
Executive Director

SOUNDING BOARD
Got a question? We've got an answer

Potty talk

I'd like to know why Metra is getting rid of the bathrooms on its trains. I ride Metra frequently, and every time I ride with my children one of them always needs to use the bathroom. Please don't get rid of them.

-Anonymous

Relax. We're not eliminating all the bathrooms. We're simply cutting some of them to

make more space on our crowded trains and save some money on maintenance costs. As any regular rider can tell you, our trains are bursting at the seams with passengers. We're doing everything we can to add capacity short of buying brand new cars, which is impossible until Springfield passes a major public works program. Our efforts include buying (on the cheap) 14 old trains that we sold (on the

cheap) in less crowded times. They also include eliminating some bathrooms, freeing up space for about six more seats per car. Every other car on the trains will still have a bathroom, which means the farthest you'll have to walk to get to one will be a car length. We think it'll save us about \$2 million a year in maintenance costs while the extra seats will generate about \$7.5 million a year in added revenue.



This drawing shows what the Ogilvie passenger concourse will look like when the MetraMarket is completed.

Market

(Continued from Page 1)

We are maximizing our assets while improving the quality of life in a city neighborhood."

Officials said the market will have a huge customer base thanks to an ideal location. Start with the 105,000 Metra riders who pass through Ogilvie every weekday. Add 125,000 Metra passengers who use the nearby Union Station, and 3,500 CTA riders who use the Clinton stop on the Green and Pink lines. Then there are nearly 500,000 people who work within a mile of the site and more than 40,000 people who live nearby.

"MetraMarket will provide

much-needed shopping and restaurant options for nearby workers and residents as well as the tens of thousands of Metra commuters who pass through Ogilvie every day," said Metra Chairman Carole Doris. "MetraMarket will also generate additional revenue for Metra, something that all of our development projects aim to accomplish."

The French Market will be run by Bensidoun, a French company that operates markets in Europe and America, including a dozen outdoor weekend markets in the Chicago area. The 15,000-square-foot space will feature more than 20 different vendors selling baked goods, fresh and organic produce, cheese, fish, meats and gourmet foods.

The first restaurant signed on to the MetraMarket is Caffe RoM, a coffee bar by day and a wine bar by night. A variety of other restaurants, including white-tablecloth and casual dining options, are planned.

A 14,000-square-foot CVS will be built along the south edge of the project. An assortment of other retailers, including boutique shops, newsstands, banks, bookstores, dry cleaners and other service providers, are also planned.

The viaduct at Randolph Street, which bisects the MetraMarket site and serves as a gateway to the popular Randolph Street restaurant row, will be renovated with creative lighting and colorful artwork. Parking for about 100 cars will also be provided.

SOUND OFF

“...setting new standards of thoughtlessness, grouchiness, pettiness, elitism and self-absorption.”
 -Chicago Sun-Times, June 12, 1994

Take the high road?

I love reading about the complaints people have, sometimes about the strangest things. Well, I'm going to try to contribute to that:

I personally have a problem with how people are too courteous to others while getting off the trains. You see, the upper level passengers, though there are fewer of them compared to the ground level, always get to merge while exiting at a one-to-one ratio with all the passengers on the main floor (sometimes even two-to-one since one person from each side of the upper level gets to go!). That then leads to the whole upper level clearing out before even the first three to four rows of passengers on the ground level getting off – it's pretty unfair if you ask me! I mean, so if you're in the last two to three rows of that cabin – forget it, you might as well sit down, have breakfast, read *War and Peace* if you're trying to get off quick – all the while you see the smirking faces of the upper level passen-

gers as they get off without delay. I propose a four-to-one ratio be unofficially implemented, where the upper level passengers should wait before coming down and merging with all the other traffic. This would only be fair. Otherwise, I'm going to start practicing my climbing skills to get myself up there so I can get off the train sooner!

I write all this with a smirk on my face — but honestly, it is my pet peeve!

-Jeffrey
 Milwaukee District North

Hey, airing pet peeves is what we're all about. Read on...

Tickets, please

I ride the Metra Electric Line to South Shore every day at 5 p.m. from the Randolph station. My issue is with these women who get on the train and don't have their ticket ready. Why does the conductor have to ask you for your ticket, then you say “Oh” and take 10 minutes searching through the suitcase you call a purse to try and find your ticket. Really. Use common sense, ladies. You already know that the conductor is going to ask for your ticket, so have some sense and the common courtesy of having it ready after you are seated. I don't feel the conductor should have to ask every last person on the train for a ticket as if you are a bunch of children.

-Anonymous

Good advice, but we doubt the ladies are the only ones to blame.

Seat hog suggestion

I employ the following approach when having to either ask for someone to move their belongings or when sitting next to someone on a train that is just crowded enough that each seat

is taken, but with only one passenger: I sit and make an immediate comment of some sort relative to the weather, train schedule, unusual nature of the crowd that night, or whatever else may be appropriate to break the ice and alleviate whatever tension may have been created by my sitting down. It may not be necessary because an empty seat should always be fair game, but I find it is a good way to keep the peace and have never been met with a negative reaction to this approach.

-Ang
 UPNW

Thanks for a wise solution to this neverending problem.

To my fellow riders

I've been riding the Rock Island train since 1981 and feel like I've earned the opportunity to speak my mind. I first would like to say that taking the train is the only way to go. I couldn't imagine having to drive everyday and paying for gas, putting up with traffic and wear and tear on the car. Nevertheless, I'd like to make the following comments to those riders who can sometimes make me wish I was on the Dan Ryan.

1. You can actually talk on a cell phone and people can hear you, you don't have to scream.

2. The train is not your garbage can, (This is directed mostly to the guy who just blew his nose and threw the Kleenex under his seat.)

3. To the guy who is constantly making those hacking noises with his throat and sinuses, please get better soon.

4. To the group of ladies that are seeking attention by laughing hysterically at 7 a.m. each morning, it's working.

5. If you eat an excess of garlic the night before, your body will reek the next day

Only 14 more years until

retirement. In the meantime I'll continue to put up with it because “It's The Only Way To Fly.”

Thanks for letting me vent.

-Jeff

You're welcome. We do venting here, too.

Cold and flu season

I would just like everybody to be more courteous when they have to cough and sneeze.

It is now known that to prevent the spread of germs, one is supposed to cover their entire mouth and nose by either sneezing or coughing into the elbow, or into a piece of tissue. Every day there are people coughing and sneezing into the air without covering their mouths and noses, and we are in a closed train car. I think it is very inconsiderate not to follow these simple hygienic measures.

I know we can't live in a bubble, but for those of us out there who are more susceptible to getting sick, it would be much appreciated if we could all respect each other and share a smile, not our germs!

-Allie

Something to remember as we approach the winter cold and flu season. And remembering to say “God bless you” to your fellow passengers wouldn't hurt either.

Crossword solution

S	H	A	V	C	S		E	L	I	P	S		E	I	E	H
S	E	L	V	A	N	O	R	I	E	E	H					
S	S	E	N	O	H	F	L	E								
G	D		G		N		S									
E			G	N	I	P	S	V	A							
S	S		O		S	U										
S	V	E	H	S												
E	E	I	T	R	E	C	A	T								
G	N	I	D	V	A											
	N															
D	Y															
E	W	O														
G	R	E	W	O	O											
D	N	E	G	E	T	W	A	I	X	E	T					
L	U	E	H	E	D											

Send us an e-mail

Write us at:
onthebilevel@metrarr.com

We try to respond specifically to every letter. Our apologies if you never heard back from us. Please keep writing with letters, notes, tales and observations for the next issue of OTBL. The best ones will make the pages of this awesome rail publication.

-The editors

Fall travel notes

Ridership keeps rising

During the first half of this year, Metra trains carried 5.2 percent more riders than in the first six months of 2007. The first half total was 42.6 million passenger trips, marking the highest January-through-June total in the agency's 24-year history.

The following routes showed gains exceeding the system average: Union Pacific North to Kenosha, 13.5 percent; North Central Service to Antioch, 13.5 percent; Milwaukee North to Fox Lake, 12.5 percent; SouthWest Service to Manhattan, 7.2 percent; Milwaukee West to Elgin-Big Timber, 6.2 percent; and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe to Aurora, 6.1 percent.

Other gainers included the Union Pacific West to Elburn, up 3.5 percent; the UP Northwest, up 3.5 percent; and the Heritage Corridor to Joliet, up 2.5 percent.

BNSF remains Metra's busiest route with 8.5 million passenger trips in the first half of 2008. Next are the Electric District to University Park, South Chicago and Blue Island with 5.6 million trips, and the UP North with 5.1 million.

Use the Bears shuttle

Fans headed for Bears games can take Metra to Ogilvie Transportation Center or Union Station and connect with CTA #128 Soldier Field Express buses.

Shuttle buses depart from Madison and Clinton and from Jackson and Canal.

Bears fans coming from the South Side can take advantage of a special Metra Electric train, added to serve all home games. Fans arriving at LaSalle Street Station should walk east on Van Buren to State Street and take the CTA #146 bus south to Soldier Field.

For Metra fare and schedule information, call the RTA at 836-7000 (city or suburbs) or visit our website at: www.metrarail.com.

Take Metra, free trolleys on weekends

Take advantage of Metra's \$5 Weekend Pass and Chicago's free weekend trolley system for fun and entertainment.

The weekend pass, valid for unlimited rides both Saturday and Sunday, can also be used with Metra's Family Fares.

Connect with free weekend Chicago trolleys at Metra, CTA and Amtrak stations. Trolleys travel to and from Navy Pier, the Museum Campus, Michigan Avenue, State Street and many stops in between.

Mini-timetables are back

By popular request, Metra's convenient wallet-sized timetables are back in stock for all Metra diesel lines. These mini-schedules fit nicely in updated plastic ticket pouch holders, making it easy to keep your train schedule and ticket together. Thanks to sponsorship of Chase Bank, you can pick each up now at your local station or downtown terminal. Get one today!

Crossword

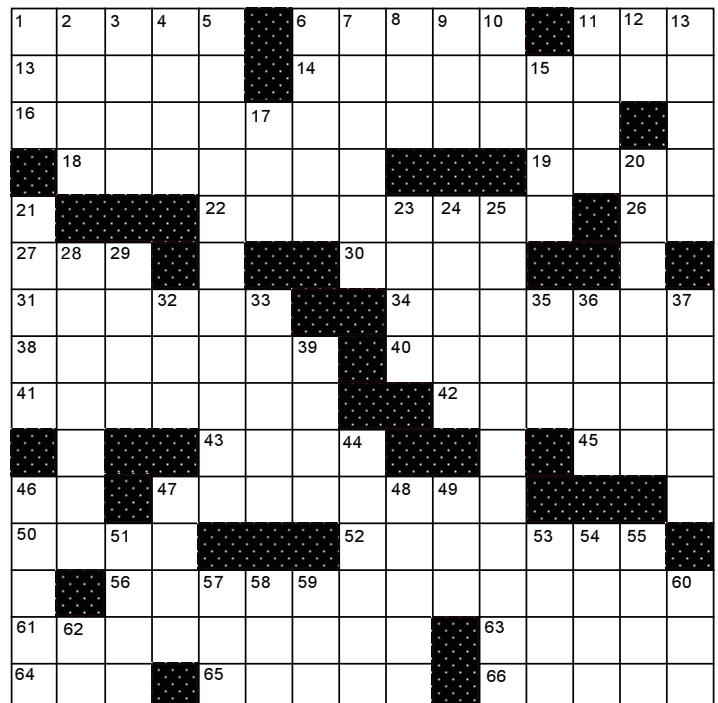
Across

- 1 Turns on ___ (agile)
- 6 Knight ride
- 11 Shade
- 13 Rubbery material
- 14 Will Smith film
- 16 Common OTBL gripe
- 18 Gambling
- 19 Epic story
- 22 Without grounds
- 26 Commercial
- 27 Snake
- 30 Start for vision, port and phone
- 31 Horned creatures
- 34 Running from
- 38 Mimic
- 40 Someone who no longer works
- 41 Spot
- 42 Scissors
- 43 Biblical twin
- 45 The Concorde, for example
- 46 Cornhusker State (abbr.)
- 47 ___ at straws
- 50 Of the mouth

Down

- 1 Swiss mountain
- 2 Coat with plaster
- 3 "Let ___"
- 4 Thaw
- 5 Common OTBL gripe
- 6 Pisces and Scorpio
- 7 Kmart rival
- 8 Comedian Philips of Downers Grove
- 9 "Turn to Stone" band
- 10 Donkey party
- 11 Superman is one
- 12 World agency
- 13 Won by a nose
- 15 Understands
- 17 Spy group
- 20 What 16-across, 56-across, 5-down and 25-down should use

- 21 Drug agents
- 23 Stare
- 24 Santa's helpers
- 25 Common OTBL gripe
- 28 Mall denizen
- 29 Smoking device
- 32 Big Apple
- 33 Chip dip
- 35 Do or ___
- 36 What 40-across should have
- 37 "Beau ___"
- 39 Earl Grey and green
- 44 Final result, or gist
- 46 Up on a map
- 47 Happiness
- 48 A hole ___
- 49 Indian bread
- 51 Land unit
- 53 Chip dip (abbr.)
- 54 Is in Spanish
- 55 Bambi's parents
- 57 "___ Miserables"
- 58 Backtalk
- 59 Mexican political party
- 60 Web feed
- 62 Common greeting



Answers on Page 3