

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metra seeking feedback on fare ideas

Off-peak pricing, day pass and zone fixes among potential from fare study

CHICAGO (Jan. 22, 2018) – Metra will hold a series of public open houses next month to gather customer feedback about several potential changes to its fare structure and ticket options.

Customers who can't attend one of the open houses can review the study recommendations and provide comments online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/MetraFares. Metra is also welcoming public comments sent to metrafaresstudy@metrarr.com. Additional study information can be found online at metrarail.com.

The goal of this initiative is to create a flexible fare structure that allows Metra to segment and price markets differently; give Metra more flexibility to increase fare revenue while providing more control over ridership impacts from fare changes; encourage off-peak travel and better use off-peak capacity; and redefine zones to define premium destinations and address perceived inconsistencies.

“What we are hoping to do is to modify our fare structure and ticket options in ways that work well for Metra’s customers and also help Metra make the best use of available resources and capacity,” said Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski.

The effort started in the summer of 2016, when Metra hired California-based Four Nines Technologies to study Metra’s fare structure, determine opportunities for changes and develop a model to help Metra evaluate the potential changes. The company’s work included conducting a survey of Metra customers last spring and holding a workshop with the Metra Board of Directors last month, where Board members selected several proposals to present to customers and the public for their feedback before further Board consideration.

The proposed changes would:

- Introduce a day pass for travel between any two zones, available on the Ventra App, priced at twice the cost of a One-Way Ticket.
 - The day pass will simplify fare payment, save time and encourage use of the Ventra App.
- Discount non-rush hour trips to/from downtown stations, perhaps by \$0.50 to \$1 per one-way trip initially, for riders using One-Way or 10-Ride tickets.
 - Discounting non-rush hour fares will allow market-specific fare changes and encourage customers to ride off-peak to alleviate peak loads.

- Redefine the inner zones so Zone A covers only the six downtown stations in Chicago’s Central Business District (Chicago Union Station, Ogilvie, LaSalle Street, Millennium, Van Buren Street and Museum Campus/11th Street); other stations currently in Zone A would be assigned to Zone B: 27th Street, McCormick Place, 18th Street, 35th Street, Western Avenue/BNSF, Halsted, Kedzie, Western Avenue/Milwaukee District/NCS and Clybourn. (Less than 1 percent of Metra riders currently travel between stations in Zone A.)
 - Restructuring Zone B will allow riders to take longer trips within the City of Chicago for the price of a one-zone fare, including travel to downtown stations on off-peak trains.
 - Defining downtown stations as premium destinations will allow market-specific fare changes and encourage customers to travel on off-peak trains to alleviate peak loads.
- Conduct a phased consolidation of Zones K, L and M into Zone J, thereby capping fares for trips that exceed 45 miles (about 1 percent of Metra riders come from those zones). The new Zone J would include 10 stations: Round Lake Beach, Lake Villa, Antioch, Long Lake, Ingleside, Fox Lake, Kenosha, McHenry, Woodstock and Harvard.
 - Consolidating Zones J, K, L, and M will cap the fare to stations in those zones and potentially mitigate ridership declines for trips that are currently the most expensive for riders at stations that have less service.
- Reassign some stations to different zones to adjust perceived inconsistencies between lines where nearby stations are in different zones. Specifically:
 - On the Milwaukee District North Line, move Forest Glen from Zone C to Zone B.
 - On the North Central Service, move Rosemont from D to C.
 - On the SouthWest Service, move Oak Lawn from D to C and Palos Park from E to D.
 - On the Metra Electric Blue Island Branch, move Ashland, Racine, West Pullman, Stewart Ridge and State Street from D to C.
 - On the Metra Electric mainline, move 83rd Street and 87th Street from C to B.
 - On the Rock Island Beverly Branch, move 123rd Street from D to C.
 - Station reassignments will provide more similar fares for customers who board at stations on different lines, but with similar distances to downtown, and may encourage more local use of these stations.
- Gradually correct the charge for each additional zone of travel so the charges are consistent. While the charge is 50 cents for most additional zones, others are 25 cents, 75 cents or \$1.25.
 - Consistent pricing will make it easier for customers to understand and determine the fare for a trip.

Before any fare structure recommendations are adopted, Metra will analyze potential costs of the changes and conduct an analysis to make sure they do not unfairly affect those riders who are financially most vulnerable. The public comment process, which is part of this analysis, will include a combination of public open houses throughout the Metra service area and opportunities to review the recommendations online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/MetraFares. Comments can also be provided via email to metrafaresstudy@metrarr.com. Additional information can be found at metrarail.com.

Open houses will be held in February on the following dates and times, at the following locations. Metra will provide reasonable auxiliary aids or services necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate. Persons requiring assistance are requested to notify Metra of their needs well in advance to provide sufficient time to make these accommodations. Requests for services should be made to 312-322-8037.

<p>Kane County Government Center 719 Batavia Ave. Geneva Thursday, Feb. 1, 4-7 p.m.</p>	<p>Libertyville Village Hall 118 W. Cook Ave. Libertyville Tuesday, Feb.13, 4-7 p.m.</p>
<p>Crystal Lake City Hall 100 W. Woodstock St. Crystal Lake Monday, Feb. 5, 4-7 p.m.</p>	<p>Clarendon Hills Village Hall 1 N. Prospect Ave. Clarendon Hills Thursday, Feb.15, 4-7 p.m.</p>
<p>Arlington Heights Village Hall 33 S. Arlington Heights Rd. Arlington Heights Thursday, Feb. 8, 4-7 p.m.</p>	<p>Will County Office Building 302 N. Chicago St. Joliet Monday, Feb. 19, 4-7 p.m.</p>
<p>Homewood Village Hall 2020 Chestnut Rd. Homewood Monday, Feb. 12, 4-7 p.m.</p>	<p>Metra Headquarters 547 W. Jackson Blvd. Chicago Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2-7 p.m.</p>

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About Metra

Metra is one of the largest and most complex commuter rail systems in North America, serving Cook, DuPage, Will, Lake, Kane and McHenry counties in northeastern Illinois. The agency provides service to and from downtown Chicago with 241 stations over 11 routes totaling nearly 500 route miles and approximately 1,200 miles of track. Metra operates nearly 700 trains and provides nearly 300,000 passenger trips each weekday.

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