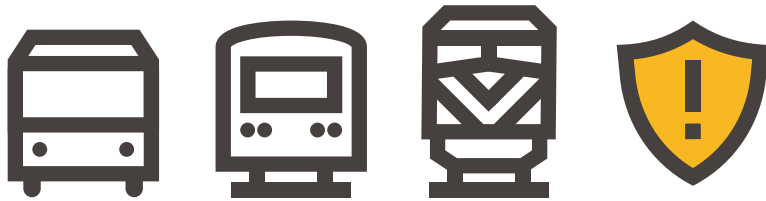


2024 Safety and Security Summit on Regional Transit

Priority Recommendations





All riders and frontline workers deserve to feel safe on transit. Making the regional transit system safer and more secure for everyone is a commitment the RTA and Service Boards made in **Transit is the Answer.**

On February 27, 2024, the RTA joined with CTA, Metra, Pace, the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, and other municipal and social service partners to host a cross-sector Public Transit Safety and Security Summit. The Safety and Security Summit gathered nearly 80 regional leaders and transit riders to highlight the progress being made by active CTA, Metra, and Pace initiatives and explore additional holistic solutions to the safety issues the transit system is facing.

Areas of focus included:

- **Enhancing personal security and addressing perception of crime on transit**
- **Incorporating transit-specific strategies into social services initiatives**
- **Creating safer, more welcoming environments in transit stations and stops**

The following report summarizes the event and articulates priority recommendations from the summit that the RTA and Service Boards, along with partners across the region, will be working to advance in the coming months.



Regional Transit Safety and Security Summit



Attendees included RTA staff and select board members, CTA, Metra, and Pace staff, peer transit agency staff, transit advocates, academic experts in the field, and representatives from the following offices and agencies: Illinois General Assembly, Illinois Department of Human Services, Chicago Mayor's Office, Chicago City Council, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Police Department, Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Village of Forest Park, and City of Evanston.

The event began with opening remarks from RTA Executive Director Leanne Redden, City of Chicago Deputy Mayor of Community Safety Garien Gatewood, and State Senator Ram Villivalam, chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee.

"Together with RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace, and suburban municipalities, the City of Chicago is committed to working holistically to improve safety across the region's public transit system," Gatewood said. "We have to be very thoughtful on how we collaborate, not only with our partners in the city, but our partners broadly, so I'm glad we're having this summit today."

"I want to thank RTA for putting this on, for taking this issue as seriously as they are," said Sen. Villivalam. "To be able to be a part of this discussion, hear the comments from people who are living and breathing this every day, is truly valuable."





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- City of Chicago Deputy Mayor of Community Safety **Garien Gatewood**

The centerpieces of the summit included:

- An hour-long panel discussion with leadership from LA Metro and Metro Transit in Minneapolis-Saint Paul that explored how their agencies approach safety challenges similar to the ones transit riders are experiencing in the Chicago region
- A presentation by RTA Senior Deputy Executive Director of Planning and Capital Programming Maulik Vaishnav, who provided an analysis of riders’ survey responses on what types of behaviors make them feel unsafe and what interventions would make them feel safer, as well as an overview of active local initiatives to address safety concerns



- A small-group breakout discussion where city and agency officials, riders, advocates, and state leaders shared personal experiences, provided feedback on existing initiatives, and identified areas where additional attention and investment is needed

You can read a complete recap and watch video from the event at transitistheanswer.org/safety and learn more about the context and feedback that led to it in *Transit is the Answer*, RTA's strategic plan for the regional transit system. Rider and operator safety is the top issue raised by riders and legislators in RTA's ongoing discussions about the fiscal cliff facing Chicago's regional system and the need to secure more funding for transit operations.



Priority Recommendations from the Summit



Breakout group participants identified priority initiatives to advance in each of the three focus areas. These recommended strategies are intended to complement existing law enforcement and social services programs and infrastructure in place today across the regional transit system. The RTA is committed to advancing these initiatives in partnership with CTA, Metra, Pace, and our partners in local and state government.



Goal #1: Enhance personal security for transit riders and workers and address perception of crime on transit

Monthly Tracking of Transit Crime:

In accordance with a new state law passed in 2023, the operating agencies (CTA, Metra, Pace) are required to publish data monthly on several operational components, including public safety across the system, the number of incidents of crime and code of conduct violations, any performance measures used to evaluate the effectiveness of investments in private security, safety equipment, and other security investments in the system. The RTA is working closely with the operating agencies to meet this requirement and will certify this data. Regular reporting of this data will increase transparency and provide opportunity to highlight important trends, both positive and negative.





What's Happening Now:

Currently, CTA reports safety and security related incidents on a monthly basis through the agency's performance dashboard. Each has security personnel who deal with a range of security issues across a diverse region; data collected and published will reflect these operational differences.

Agencies Involved:

RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace, Chicago Police Department, suburban municipal police departments

Enhanced Outreach to Support Riders:

Summit participants recommended expanding efforts to train non-police personnel who serve as the public face of the system to help address real and perceived safety issues. These agents act as a resource for riders and consistent human presence on the system, providing information on wayfinding, fare payment, rider codes of conduct, social services support, and other needs. This may include repurposing private security guards or other similar initiatives or expansion of training for current frontline staff to provide services similar to transit ambassadors.



What's Happening Now:

Currently, many of the activities described above are handled by bus and train operators, police, security guards, station agents, and other staff. Operators and conductors across the system are trained in de-escalation. Metra has a transit ambassador training program for existing staff – including conductors – to develop skills in managing difficult situations with riders and learn nuanced de-escalation techniques. Metra also has a Customer Response Team for an additional security presence at stations and platforms and providing wayfinding and ticketing assistance to riders. Pace manages a team of transit ambassadors that ride the system and provide resources about various available services.

Agencies Involved:

RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace

Public Awareness Campaign:

The RTA in partnership with CTA, Metra, and Pace will develop and execute a campaign to highlight and promote both statistical evidence that points to reduced crime and share “real life” rider etiquette and safety tips from riders and operators, with a focus on earned and social media. The campaign will complement each agency’s existing safety and rider messaging. Stories may include successful social services and outreach partnerships. Each agency has a unique operating environment and related challenges; the campaign will reflect these differences by mode and geography. Success will be measured by the number of riders reached and evaluating trends in rider feedback surveys.

Agencies Involved:

RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace



Goal #2: Incorporate transit-specific strategies into social services initiatives

Non-Police Response Units:

Operating agencies expand their partnerships with municipalities and public-health experts to pilot non-police responses to mental health related emergencies on the transit system featuring a more specialized, trauma-informed, health-focused mobile crisis response. As planned through the City of Chicago’s Treatment Not Trauma Initiatives, “teams of trained professionals will address mental health, substance use, and homelessness issues, effectively relieving police of their responsibility to function as mental health workers and offering more appropriate care.”



What's Happening Now:

Currently, all emergency calls on the system are handled by police departments.

Agencies Involved:

RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Police Department, suburban municipal police departments



Expansion of NARCAN Access:

Local health departments partner with operating agencies to increase availability of NARCAN by making it available in free vending machines at stations, facilities, and platforms across the regional transit system. Distribution of the life-saving drug used to treat opioid overdose could be focused first at the highest traffic downtown stations and suburban transit centers before expanding throughout the system. Local health departments and social service agencies could help identify locations and manage supply.

What's Happening Now:

Currently, NARCAN is available on the CTA system through a vending machine at the 95th Street Red Line stop, with plans for expansion to additional stops where 24-hour service operates, and Metra police carry NARCAN across their system.

Agencies Involved:

RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Police Department, suburban municipal police departments

Expansion of Social Service Outreach:

The RTA partners with operating agencies to secure funding to expand partnerships with social services organizations that provide support to people experiencing homelessness, mental health crises, people at risk of overdose, and other vulnerable transit riders. Outreach is focused on late-night and overnight service, helping connect riders with resources to address immediate (e.g. food, clothing, medical kits, low-barrier shelter) and longer-term needs (e.g. supportive housing).

Issues and needs vary by mode and operator. For example, needs are greatest on CTA Red and Blue Line trains that run 24 hours per day, while Metra and Pace service does not run overnight.

Regional transit is intended for transportation purposes and the focus will be on short and long-term solutions so that our transit system is not used as a shelter of last resort. Sheltering on the system can put employees, individuals experiencing homelessness, and other passengers at risk.

What's Happening Now:

Currently, CTA invests \$2 million annually in partnership with the Chicago Department of Family & Support Services enabling social service agencies to engage riders experiencing homelessness and offer connections to housing, support services, and harm-reduction materials.

In February 2024, Metra hired social workers to coordinate responsible and humanistic responses to unhoused persons and mental health crisis incidents throughout their service area. The success of this work will depend on the cooperation of municipal health care workers and community organizations. Metra is using social services case management software to track contacts with these populations. Traditionally, Metra's mental health programs have focused on suicide prevention, with various field personnel prepared to intervene in crisis situations.

Agencies Involved:

RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Police Department, Continuum of Care organizations, suburban municipal and county health and police departments



Goal #3: Create safer, more welcoming environments in transit stations and stops

Launch Station Activation Grant Pilot Program:

In February the RTA launched a new pilot station activation category within the agency's Community Planning program to support temporary activation projects that improve safety at transit stations and stops and make them more fun and welcoming public spaces. The RTA will work with operating agencies and municipalities to evaluate the effectiveness of this pilot program, make necessary changes and improvements, and determine if a long-term solution is viable.

Agencies Involved:

RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace



Capital Improvements at Stations and Stops:

The transit operators, with support from RTA, will continue to secure and dedicate federal, state, and local capital funding to making lasting improvements at transit stations and stops. Improvements include accessibility upgrades, lighting, bus shelters and benches, wayfinding signage, digital signs and announcements, and more.

What's Happening Now:

Major progress has been made in each of these areas over the last four years with the infusion of capital funds from the state's Rebuild Illinois plan and the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Agencies Involved:

RTA, CTA, Metra, Pace, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Police Department, suburban municipal police departments

