



Regional
Transportation
Authority

RTA COVID-19 Recovery Scenario Planning

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Introduction

In response to the economic crisis and dramatic shift in travel demand produced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) initiated a scenario planning project. The purpose of the project is to look forward one to two years to articulate what challenges may lie ahead for regional transit as a result of the impacts of COVID-19. The purpose is not to predict the future – many factors are far beyond transit’s control – but to analyze multiple possible futures and test goals and strategies in the *Invest in Transit* regional strategic plan.

The COVID-19 Recovery Scenario Planning project was conducted by an internal working group and included a virtual workshop with external stakeholders, presentations to the RTA Board, and a survey. The project commenced in April 2020 and work was first presented to the RTA Board at the August 2020 meeting. Its purpose is to help leaders, stakeholders, and the general public conceptualize the plausible futures and then to think creatively about how transit can respond to the presented challenges.

Methodology

The internal RTA working group consisted of staff from Planning and Market Development, Government Affairs, Finance, and Communications. Initial work focused on gathering economic and public health information from regional and national sources, conceptualizing possible future scenarios, and articulating how these changes may be realized in terms that relate to the work of the RTA.

Initially six scenarios were defined, ranging from a stalled economy in which people are not working or traveling on one extreme, to a more positive future in which sustainable, shared travel bounces back with a strong economy. Each scenario looks at three broad factors and defines each as favorable (+) or unfavorable (-) in comparison to 2019.

- **Economy:** How will transit funding be impacted in a weak or strong economy?
- **Commuting:** How will growth in remote work impact overall transit ridership?
- **Transit Mode Choice:** Of the workforce that is still commuting to work, how will transit mode share compete in this new mobility environment?

Figure 1 shows all six scenarios, defined by the three factors.

Figure 1: Scenarios by Factor Values

Stalled Economy		
Economy	Commuting	Transit Mode Share
--	--	-
Recession Redux		
Economy	Commuting	Transit Mode Share
-	--	+
Congested Recovery		
Economy	Commuting	Transit Mode Share
+	--	--
Telecommute Recovery		
Economy	Commuting	Transit Mode Share
+	-	+
New Mobility		
Economy	Commuting	Transit Mode Share
++	-	-
Regional Remix		
Economy	Commuting	Transit Mode Share
++	-	+

The internal working group developed two analysis tools to project public and system revenues for each scenario. Public revenues consist primarily of the RTA sales tax. Using historical records, relationships were established between regional economic performance and sales tax returns so as to project public funding under each scenario. System revenues consist primarily of fares that customers pay to ride transit. Using Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data and geospatial analysis of the existing network, ridership by mode was projected based on changes in employment by industry and transit mode share under each scenario.

For each scenario, projections of public and system revenue were compared to a baseline of 2019. It is worth noting, however, that no scenario predicts a return to 2019 performance. Commuting decreases in each scenario, reflecting the growth in remote work that had been observed in the RTA *Market Assessment* even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Using 2019 as a baseline is useful for quantifying differences in funding levels and discussing how service and operations may need to change as a result, but the central assumption is that COVID-19 impacts will fundamentally change how transit is funded and planned in our region in the coming years.

Scenarios for Discussion

While all six scenarios represent different plausible futures, three were selected for discussion with the RTA Board and stakeholders in relation to the RTA regional transit strategic plan, *Invest in Transit*. These three scenarios are described in more detail in the section that follows.



Stalled Economy

In this scenario the economy struggles. A recession becomes a depression, there is high unemployment across industries. Remote work continues to grow and, of those still working outside of home, mode share for transit declines from 2019 baseline levels.

The stalled economy scenario estimates a 45% decline in the combination of public and system revenues to operate the regional network. The current plans and policies will not be sufficient to navigate the realities of this scenario. New policies will be needed to ensure mobility is provided where it is most needed.

Congested Recovery

In this scenario the economy rebounds but is stymied by congestion and lost productivity. Remote work continues to grow and, of those still working outside of home, mode share for transit declines from 2019 baseline levels.

The congested recovery scenario projects a 20% decline in revenues, most of the declines coming from system revenue (low ridership produces weak farebox recovery). New policies will be needed to manage externalities and shape behavior.

Regional Remix

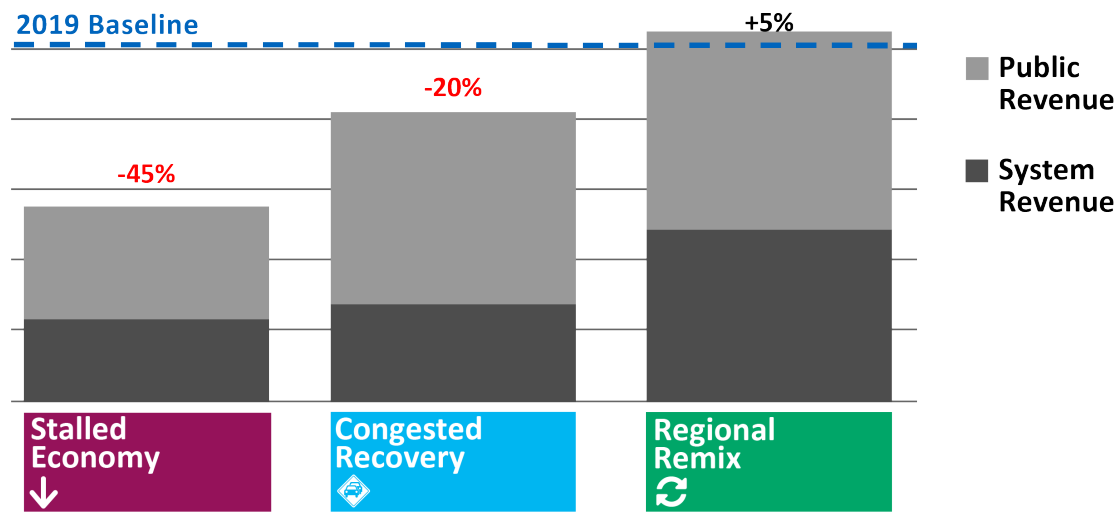
In this scenario the economy exceeds 2019 levels. Remote work continues to grow but, of those working outside of home, transit mode share is strong.

The regional remix scenario produces a 5% increase in revenues from a combination of public and system. Current plans in place envision this reality but new emphasis will need to be placed on coordination and cooperation to fully realize this scenario.

The conditions presented by the defining factors of each scenario produce corresponding estimates for public and system revenue to fund transit operations. In total, each of the three were presented to the RTA Board, stakeholders that participated in the workshop, and survey respondents.

Figure 2 shows estimated public and system revenue by scenario in comparison to 2019 baseline. These estimates were developed using the analytical tools developed by RTA staff and described in the previous section. These estimates represent the public (light gray) and system revenue (dark gray) that could be available under each scenario to fund annual transit operations.

Figure 2: Estimated Revenue for Annual Operations by Scenario Compared to 2019



Stakeholder Workshop

The RTA held two virtual workshops for stakeholders on August 24th and 31st, 2020. Each event was hosted via the Microsoft Teams platform. Invitations were sent in the weeks prior, drawing from the list of stakeholders that participated in the original strategic plan workshops in 2017. Participants included over 40 representatives from local and regional governments, Service Board staff, transit advocates, and private industry.

Each workshop included a general discussion of the scenario planning project and an introduction into each scenario. Participants were then broken out into groups covering one of each of the scenarios. Breakout discussions focused on how, as a region, will we continue to

work toward the goals of *Invest in Transit*, within the realities of each individual scenario. Notes from each breakout discussion group are included in Appendix 1.

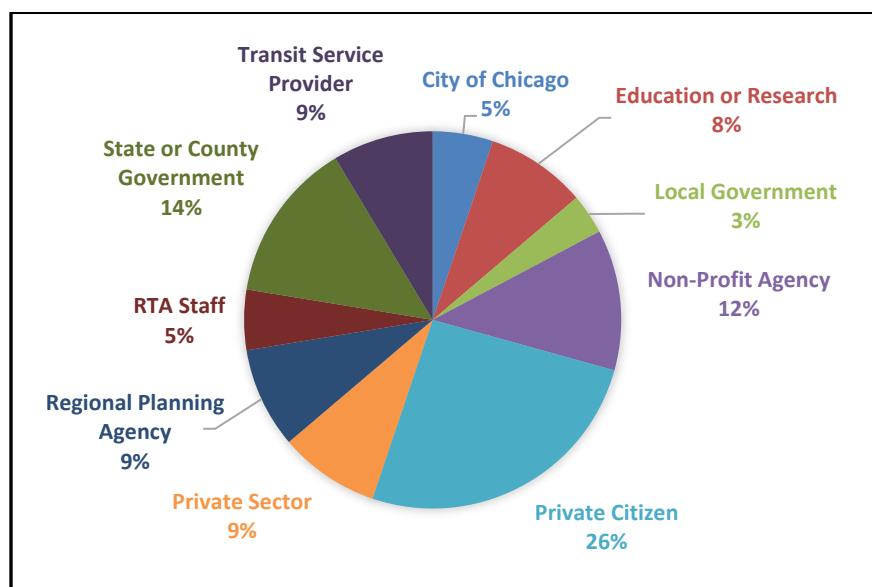
Survey

The survey was designed by RTA staff and distributed to workshop participants via email. Additionally, the survey was promoted and distributed to the general public via the RTA *Ride On* blog at <https://rideonrtachicago.com/>.

Survey respondents were asked to identify the type of organization they represent, their role at the organization, and whether they participated in one of the virtual workshops. Respondents had the choice to reply to a specific scenario(s), answer generally about all scenarios, or to customize their own future scenario and provide responses. In total, 58 surveys were completed.

Figure 3 shows respondents by professional affiliation.

Figure 3: Survey Respondents by Affiliation, (n = 58)



Feedback Received

The stakeholder workshops and survey were framed in context to the three goals of the RTA regional transit strategic plan, *Invest in Transit*. Workshop participants and survey respondents were asked to consider what actions might be needed to continue working towards each goal, considering the challenges presented in the scenario.

The feedback received from both workshops and the survey have been summarized here by individual goal. While the scenarios represent differing plausible futures, much of the discussion and many of the survey responses, across all scenarios, show commonalities. Complete notes from the workshops and survey results can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

Goal 1: Deliver Value on our Investment

Survey respondents and workshop participants were asked to “...identify the most important funding issues on which the RTA and Service Boards should focus to help provide value and meet financial goals, if funding levels change in the next one to two years.”

Responses and discussion included **federal actions** such as lobbying for additional federal bailout funding, lobbying for significant reform to federal formula funds, and lobbying for federal action to make program funding more flexible.

State and local actions included expanding or modifying existing taxes, adding new taxes such as congestion pricing, utilizing local referenda, and adjusting the farebox recovery ratio to reflect uncertainty in farebox sustainability moving forward.

Lastly, responses and discussion for **RTA action** included shifting formula funding models to focus on need and maintaining essential service, rethinking capital investments and freeing up capital funds to be utilized for operations in emergency, and shifting more funds to bus-oriented services.

Goal 2: Build on the Strengths of our Network

Survey respondents and workshop participants were asked to “...indicate which of the Invest in Transit key markets would need the most focus, based on your view of the effects of this Scenario, in the next one to two years.”

The **top three markets** identified for needing additional focus were: 1) Chicago South Side, 2) Suburban Cook County, and 3) Suburban Job Clusters.

Additionally, Goal 2 asked “... please discuss the mobility needs that are best fit to serve the critical markets identified and help regional transit Build on the Strengths of the Network...”

General themes included:

- Adjusting service levels to reflect softer demand for travel into downtown Chicago at peak times
- Rethinking job clusters based on emerging and growing industries, focusing on in-person/on-site work

- Equity considerations, including improved bus speed and performance, safety and cleanliness of transit, and focusing on essential workers and essential travel
- Prioritizing rapid transit and multi-modality, while increasing service on medium and high-ridership routes and lines, reducing or eliminating unproductive or non-competitive routes, and improving station accessibility across the system
- Improving non hub-and-spoke service patterns: suburb to suburb connections, reverse commute, and first/last-miles of journeys.

Goal 3: Stay Competitive

Survey respondents and workshop participants were asked to select the “...most important strategies identified in *Invest in Transit* which will enable regional transit to Stay Competitive, based on your view on travel behavior and transit ridership in the next one to two years.”

By a wide margin, the **top two identified strategies** were 1) improving system-wide bus speed and reliability and 2) advancing premium bus corridors.

Additionally, Goal 3 asked respondents and participants to “... identify additional strategies for regional transit to Stay Competitive...”

General themes included:

- Technology to improve the customer experience, keep customers safe and informed while riding, and make it easier to take transit
- Partnerships with new mobility companies such as ride-hail and bike share, to improve connectivity and coordination, first/last mile challenges, demand response, and paratransit
- Flexibility in how services are planned operated to reflect market conditions that may change again in the future
- Structure fare policy to improve system integration across the three service boards and, accurately price mobility based on cost (e.g., congestion pricing, parking), and consider free fares or fair fares

Conclusion

The purpose of the COVID-19 Recovery Scenario Planning project was not to predict the future but to analyze multiple possible futures and test the goals and strategies of the regional transit strategic plan, *Invest in Transit*. Put another way, the purpose was to provide a useful structure for discussion of what challenges may lie ahead and to identify concepts and strategies that may be needed to ensure that transit remains at the core of the region’s mobility network.

Measured against its stated purpose, the scenario planning project assisted in producing discussion and gleaning feedback that will be useful to chart a path forward.

In all three formats for presentation and across the different scenarios, common themes emerged: sources of funding need to be expanded, and once secured require increased flexibility in how resources are allocated; the network needs to increasingly focus on the needs of transit-dependent populations; innovations in bus enhancements and communication can help transit compete in a changing mobility environment.

RTA Board Feedback

In discussion from presentations made at the August and September RTA Board meetings, directors highlighted the urgency of the moment, noting that the realities faced by the region will result in challenging decisions to come. Board members also expressed cautious optimism that the moment can represent an opportunity to create the transit network the region truly needs – centering on the needs of transit-dependent riders and ensuring we preserve essential mobility across the region.

Above all else, the Board stressed bold action to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on regional transit. Directors emphasized bold innovations, to redefine the RTA network; to reinvent and reinvest in regional transit.

Next Steps

RTA staff will continue using the scenario project to provide a useful structure for discussion in formats such as presenting to the RTA Citizen Advisory Board, conference presentations, and other venues as appropriate. Additionally, work has commenced on shifting efforts towards recovery activities, planning the regional network of tomorrow in the uncertainty of today.

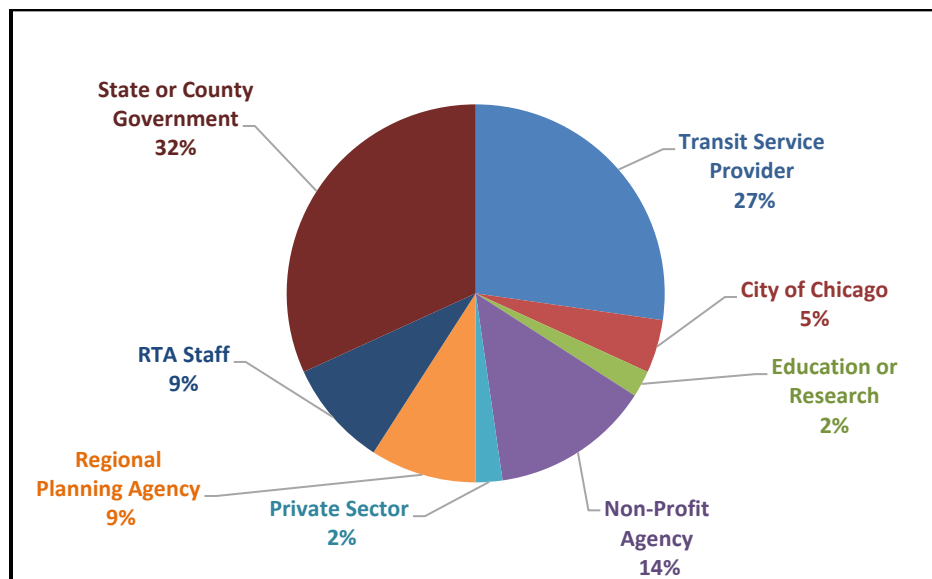
Appendix 1: Detailed Workshop Discussion Feedback

The RTA held two virtual workshops for stakeholders on August 24th and 31st, 2020, Session 1 and Session 2, respectively. Each event was hosted via the Microsoft Teams platform. Invitations were sent in the weeks prior, drawing from the list of stakeholders that participated in the original strategic plan workshops in 2017. Participants included over 40 representatives from local and regional governments, Service Board staff, transit advocates, and private industry.

The workshop began with a general presentation of the entire project and each individual scenario. Participants were then broken-out into groups, each discussing a single scenario in relation to the goals of *Invest in Transit*. In practice, the break-out sessions produced unforeseen technical challenges. The Regional Remix scenario break-out was completed for each workshop session, the Stalled Economy and Congested Recovery were each completed once.

The following discussion notes were transcribed in real-time during each break-out discussion. Notes are organized by Session, break-out scenario, and corresponding goal from *Invest in Transit*. They provide a summary of the topics raised and discussed in the group settings, without any emphasis or analysis added.

Figure A1.1: Workshop Participants by Affiliation, (n=44)



Session 1: Stalled Economy Breakout Discussion Notes

Goal 1: Deliver Value on Our Investment

Topic	Notes
Federal Level	Only entity that can really provide support needed, stimulus not only for transit but for the economy in general. White collar folks will not be getting on trains anymore. Federal capital funding might come through not requiring 20% match.
State Level	Perhaps change statutory requirements regarding bond funds, using bonds for operating expense, not just capital.
Local Level	Think about workforce mobility. If there are jobs here, people will flock here to follow the jobs. Metra does well getting people downtown, but not outside of Loop. Other areas' jobs are not that depressed. Concern about offices quitting locating in Loop for suburban areas. Perhaps move to more bus-based focus to get people where they need to go.
Other	P3's, are there remaining large employers to look to for investment? Not done in past but might be source of revenue.

Goal 2: Build on the Strengths of Our Network

Topic	Notes
New priorities to meet mobility needs	There will be many competing interests, this will be tough. If we just look at where service is now, we might miss needs. Will jobs move to where transit infrastructure is lacking? Just providing service where jobs are now will make disparities worse.
Changes in fares or service	Identify key areas to ensure we have decent levels of service. Dig deeper to identify where service can be better coordinated and provided. More express services to move people faster. Service coordination needs subsidy; providing transit throughout region has always been difficult cost-wise, this is exacerbated by COVID.
6 Regional Markets	
Suburban Job Clusters	May be growth in these nodes and less intense CBD, so need to be able to shift services away from single hub to multiple hubs. Rail could be a way to get to these hubs but will need bus to link to jobs.
Chicago North Side	
CBD	As jobs move out of CBD, think about getting people out to other locations just outside CBD. Disperse from hub and spoke model -- maybe there should be multiple hubs. Operating costs to provide this service is high, while funding is more constrained.

Chicago South Side	
Suburban Cook	
ADA Paratransit	Statutorily, ADA gets funding first, so this area is where we have least control or relief. Costs are skyrocketing due to single rides during COVID. Simply cannot reduce service, will put more pressure on other areas. Maybe federal funding for operations should work to cover this mode -- a legislative fix.
Other	Unreasonable fears about using transit, about being in a downtown office will be crucial to address over the coming months.

Goal 3: Stay Competitive

Topic	Notes
Prioritization of <i>Invest in Transit</i> policies	People may perceive transit as more unhealthy or unsafe – use factual marketing to overcome these fears. Increased cooperation with “competitors” i.e., TNC’s could be leveraged as a tool to help us out as we cut service.
Other	<p>Contactless ticketing, mobile app development to limit amount of contact will probably be big going forward. The way train cars are loaded/unloaded might require rethinking designs. Need to look again at fares to make sure they are cost-effective to compete with driving. Limit interactions with frontline staff. Ability to use one card to pay for transit across all three Service Boards. Do better at connecting suburban job clusters (e.g., Pulse Line) would help, particularly with shift to bus use.</p> <p>Actions to provide better in reaction to COVID could help in long-run to provide better service that is more competitive.</p>

- General notes:
 - Regional cooperation between Service Boards.
 - Bus is likely to take a larger role; need to use technology and bus priority to improve speed.
 - Need to be able to react to changing market needs.

Session 1: Regional Remix Breakout Discussion Notes

Goal 1: Deliver Value on Our Investment

Topic	Notes
Federal Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal funds can be limiting since don't apply to operational costs
State Level	
Local Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower the farebox recovery ratio? Separate funding for paratransit instead of using the same bucket Employee parking tax that goes to transit regional pool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask employers to address things directly Different kind of value capture
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in service?

Goal 2: Build on the Strengths of Our Network

Topic	Notes
New priorities to meet mobility needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on in-between areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 390 corridor in DuPage New first and last mile opportunities As employers have more dispersed office sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus new satellite work centers near existing regional transit (Metra stations, CTA corridors) Within walking distance of existing transit
Changes in fares or service	
6 Regional Markets	
Suburban Job Clusters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locations mostly between Metra lines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivize smaller businesses to be near transit
Chicago North Side	
CBD	
Chicago South Side	
Suburban Cook	
ADA Paratransit	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current ART/BRT projects Cook – DuPage will help serve new markets Transit Equity Orgs (mostly in South/West side)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transit doesn't always meet the needs of disadvantaged and disabled communities ○ Focus more on improving transit for south and west sides ○ For immigrant and low-income communities ○ Stations and bus stops should be safe and accessible ● Look at nontraditional markets that are becoming a larger share of commuters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Random movement needs aren't as well met ● Less focus on CBD BUT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The loop is what makes transit work in Chicago ○ Even if it loses jobs, will still be one of the largest job centers ○ Need to continue serve the CBD
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Goal 3: Stay Competitive

Topic	Notes
Prioritization of <i>Invest in Transit</i> policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow 3rd party to join into Ventra app <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schedule TNC on app ○ Whole trip approach instead of partial trip ○ Easier for people to navigate the system ● How do we think as Mobility as a Service? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whole trip, not just train or bus ride ● Stay competitive against the home office/ WFH? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Messaging about the value of proximity ○ What is the value of continuing to use transit? ● Expanding BRT outside of the Loop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring that the lanes are just for buses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enforcement? ○ Increasing efficiency to serve communities outside of the Loop ○ Put more focus on advancing bus priority to key markets
Other	

Session 2: Congested Recovery Breakout Discussion

Notes

Goal 1: Deliver Value on Our Investment

Topic	Notes
Federal Level	
State Level	
Local Level	Look at little nodes of transit throughout the region. RTA could spearhead some private service for suburb-to-suburb travel. Transit could re-invent itself at this time, maybe more flexible from the service provision perspective.
Other	Equity will be something to consider... people that need transit the most may not be on the routes contributing the most revenue

Goal 2: Build on the Strengths of Our Network

Topic	Notes
New priorities to meet mobility needs	First pass – focus on those without cars. Bus lanes would ensure quick and efficient service and will retain passengers. Will need to be more efficient, which is a problem when offering micro-mobility service, which is more labor (cost) intensive. Longer buses offer more space and use only one driver; best for offering safety to riders.
Changes in fares or service	Look to COVID research, essential workers using buses more than ever, hub and spoke routes took biggest hits. Need to re-look at use of monthly passes to see what people will need.
6 Regional Markets	
Suburban Job Clusters	
Chicago North Side	
CBD	There will be shifts in populations, in job clusters away from city center that will definitely affect the way the system is set up as hub and spoke but this is further out into the future.
Chicago South Side	
Suburban Cook	
ADA Paratransit	
Other	If gas tax revenues will be increasing due to more people driving, this may be another revenue stream for transit.

Goal 3: Stay Competitive

Topic	Notes
Prioritization of <i>Invest in Transit</i> policies	Regaining trust will be key to improving ridership. Technology to show crowding on transit vehicles will be important.

Other	Recovery ratio may need to be adjusted. Transit is never meant to be competitive to car use, it's a complement... that's the messaging that needs to happen. Transit has not gotten that word out effectively since Metra's 'way to really fly' campaign.
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Session 2: Regional Remix Breakout Discussion Notes

Goal 1: Deliver Value on Our Investment

Topic	Notes
Federal Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the federal funding dependable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More resilient if we don't rely too much on the feds
State Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much reliance of ridership in funding? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change farebox recovery rate
Local Level	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to confirm what ridership is looking for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Addressed in second goal • Is ridership the right metric • Provide accessibility to communities with high concentration of essential workers • Economically disconnected workers • Often on the south and west side • Might still be less ridership, despite more ways to connect • Funding alternatives from the strategic plans

Goal 2: Build on the Strengths of Our Network

Topic	Notes
New priorities to meet mobility needs	
Changes in fares or service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexible service • Demand may be changing • Lower density areas – more shared ride services • Not one size fits all – need to be flexible
6 Regional Markets	
Suburban Job Clusters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More demand here because jobs are moving out of the CBD • Need to focus on movement to suburban job clusters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Travel in all directions – not only to CBD in AM peak

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shipping and manufacturing could come back long before Office work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different markets, different stories Need to differentiate
Chicago North Side	
CBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less demand potentially
Chicago South Side	
Suburban Cook	
ADA Paratransit	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McHenry County is working with Pace to work towards non-fixed routes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-evaluate how outlying counties utilize transit, since the main source (Metra commuting) is down Pace ridership is at about 50% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly essential workers New strategic plan In new growth cities – mononuclear

Goal 3: Stay Competitive

Topic	Notes
Prioritization of <i>Invest in Transit</i> policies	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at corridors for improvement Let's see projects implemented and get them going McHenry has been trying to integrate more technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ventra combined with Dial-A-Ride service Most of the ridership is on the dial-a-ride system New ways to provide transit service Integrate across service boards RTA could do more partnerships with CMAP about regional policies Congestion pricing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Game changer in staying competitive Should incorporate an equity prospective Regulate/pricing modes that are underpriced in terms of social cost

Appendix 2: Complete Survey Responses

The survey was designed by RTA staff and distributed to workshop participants via email. Additionally, the survey was promoted and distributed to the general public via the RTA blog, *Ride On*, <https://rideonrtachicago.com/>.

Survey respondents were asked to identify the type of organization they represent, their role at the organization, and whether or not they participated in one of the virtual workshops. Respondents had the choice to reply to a specific scenario(s), answer generally about all scenarios, or to customize their own future scenario and provide responses. The survey opened on August 31st, 2020 and closed on September 30th, 2020.

Figures A2.1 – 4 show participants by organization type and role, and scenario selected by workshop non-participants and participants.

Figure A2.1: Survey Respondents by Affiliation, (n = 58)

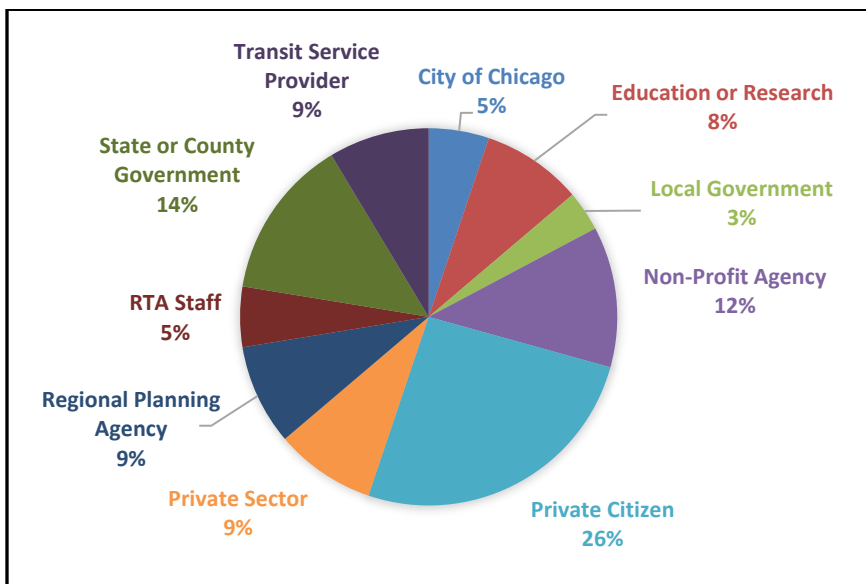


Figure A2.1: Survey Respondents by Role, (n = 58)

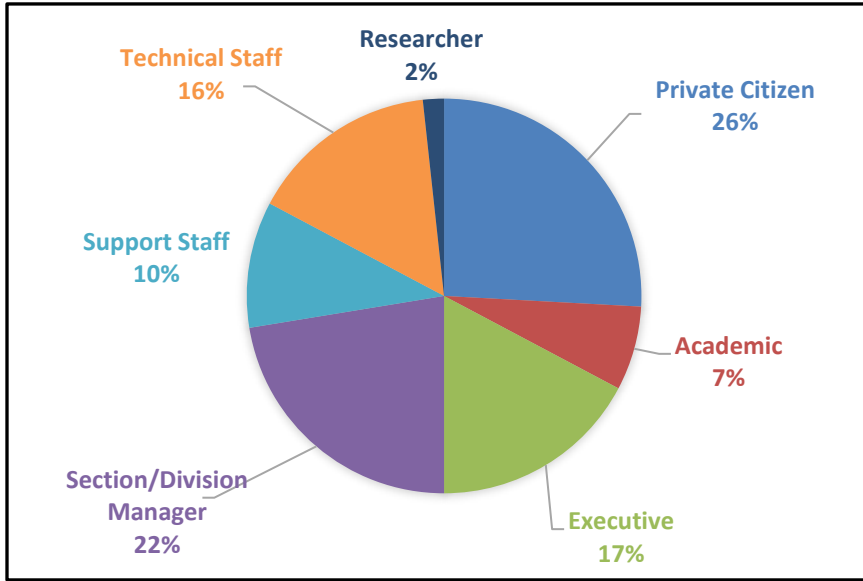


Figure A2.2: Workshop Non-Participants by Scenario Response (n = 41)

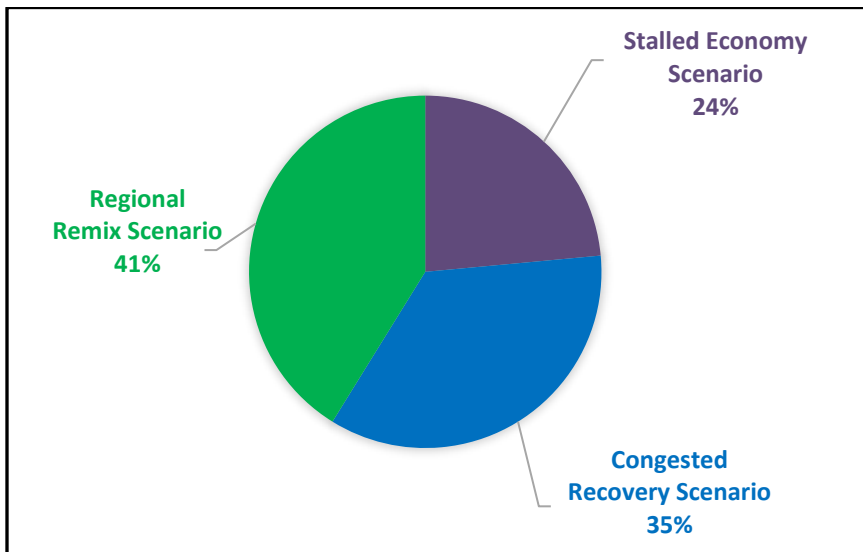
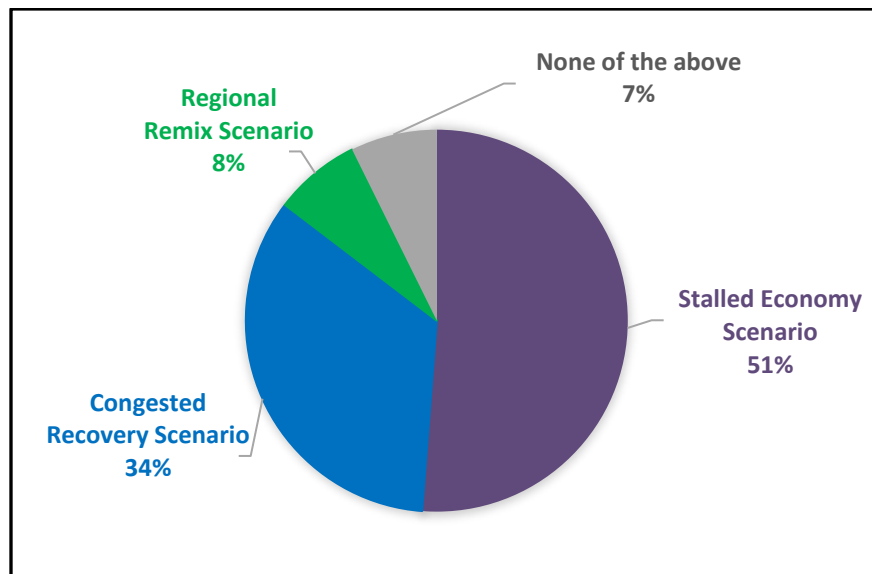


Figure A2.3: Workshop Participants by Scenario Response (n = 17)



Given the conceptual nature of any scenario planning exercise, the survey questions are primarily open-ended, many allowing for free text answers from respondents. The following section tabulates responses for multiple choice and rank questions and summarizes for free text, organized by the goals of *Invest in Transit*. The text color indicates the corresponding scenario as follows:

- Answers Stated Across All Scenarios in **BLACK**
- Stalled Economy Answers in **PURPLE**
- Congested Recovery Answers in **BLUE**
- Regional Remix Answers in **GREEN**

Goal 1: Deliver Value on Our Investment

- A. Federal Level
 - a. **Additional CARES Act funding**
 - b. **Work with stakeholders for significant federal program**
 - c. **Lobby to lift limitations on how federal \$\$ can be used**
- B. State/Local Level
 - a. **Tax revenue**
 - i. **Graduated Income Tax in Illinois**
 - ii. **RTA Graduated Income Tax**
 - 1. **Start at \$250,000 on a sliding/parabolic scale**

- iii. More sales tax
 - iv. Access to general tax revenues; use graduated scale; recognize transit benefits all of region
 - v. New sales tax (internet, food delivery)
 - b. Change farebox recovery ratio requirement**
 - c. State assistance if there are no federal funds
 - d. Use local referendum to fund needed services
 - e. Congestion pricing**
 - i. For single occupancy vehicles
 - ii. Make sure to address equity (i.e. waivers for low income drivers)
- C. RTA Actions
 - a. RTA should appoint private business people to cut costs to balance the budget
 - b. Move capital funding to support operations**
 - i. Rethink operating/capital allocation
 - c. Reformulate service based on need (not fare collection)
 - d. Re-Evaluate planned capital investment**
 - i. High cost infrastructure projects without allocated funding should be paused
 - ii. Revisit projects to respond to changing realities
 - iii. Postpone Metra capital projects to see if new demand still justifies them
 - e. Change how funding is allocated**
 - i. Allocate SB funding on need
 - ii. Revisit funding allocation to fund by priority/need not service board
 - iii. Implement performance-based planning system to evaluate all the service boards
 - iv. Provide funding options specific to maintaining essential operations
 - v. Shift rail funding to bus
 - vi. Re-allocate funds from Metra to CTA for high-priority system users.

Goal 2: Build on the Strengths of Our Network

This goal focuses on the service improvements and infrastructure investments that the Transit Agencies would like to make in key transit markets throughout the region. The six key transit markets are:

- 1) Suburban Job Clusters
- 2) Chicago North Side
- 3) Chicago Central Business District (CBD)
- 4) Chicago South Side

- 5) Suburban Cook
- 6) ADA Paratransit

Survey respondents were first asked to “...indicate which of these markets would need the most focus, based on your view of the effects of this Scenario, in the next one to two years.” Table A2.1 shows selected markets by scenario response.

Table A2.1: Key Transit Markets for Focus by Scenario Response

Key Markets for Focus	Stalled Economy	Congested Recovery	Regional Remix
1. Suburban Job Clusters	11	10	1
2. Chicago North Side	3	7	1
3. Chicago Central Business District (CBD)	7	12	1
4. Chicago South Side	14	15	0
5. Suburban Cook	9	12	2
6. ADA Paratransit	9	7	0

Additionally, Goal 2 asked participants to “... please discuss the mobility needs that are best fit to serve the critical markets identified and help regional transit Build on the Strengths of the Network...”

For clarity responses have been grouped by Key Transit Markets and by general themes that emerged in the open-ended responses, again using color coding to indicate scenario response.

Key Transit Markets

- A. Focus on Suburban Job Clusters
 - a. Should be strong focus
 - b. Including Collar County job clusters
 - c. Offices may move here
 - d. More service to suburban manufacturing/logistics
- B. Focus on Suburban Cook County
 - a. Improve accessibility
 - b. Look at origins and destinations
- C. Focus on CBD
 - a. More impact to focus on dense, populated areas
 - b. Improve facility maintenance
 - c. Address the needs of unhoused people
- D. Focus on Chicago North Side
 - a. Likely area for greater work-from-home

- b. Complete RPM
- c. Already has strong transit
- d. Work on accessibility for people with disabilities
- E. Focus on ADA Paratransit
 - a. **Priority to fully funding and operating ADA paratransit routes**
 - b. Upgrading service with proper amenities and technology

General Themes

- F. Decreased demand to/from the CBD
 - a. Focus and invest in suburban transit instead of CTA and Metra
 - b. **Flatten schedule and provide service continuously through the region**
 - i. Use for non-work trips
 - ii. Increase city-to-suburban and suburb-to-suburb service
 - c. Focus more on traditional hub and spoke to take longer trips off of regional expressway
 - i. Maintain grid system
 - d. Redo entire service model
 - e. Reimagine service beyond 9-5 commuting
- G. New job clusters
 - a. Identify the job clusters that still have employment presence and prioritize connections between and service to those areas
 - b. Expect new localized work hubs to form and transit can respond connecting to these Hub Center
 - c. Jobs clusters where people can't work from home
 - d. New job markets where transit is needed for access to new jobs
 - i. i.e. Amazon site
- H. Equity
 - a. **Service priority should be routes that service low-income neighborhoods**
 - b. Focus on vulnerable users
 - c. Distribute funding equitably
 - i. Geographic, sociodemographic, modal
 - d. **Safe and clean service to transit dependent population**
 - i. Investing in greatest need will add value for future
 - ii. Long-range infrastructure should be invested in these areas as well as short-range operations funding
 - e. **Focus on service to the South Side**
 - i. Dedicated BRT lanes
 - ii. Improve speed and reliability
 - iii. Improve accessibility and service to destinations other than downtown
 - f. West side and south suburbs too
 - g. Support off-peak riders

- h. **Focus service on essential workers in transit deserts**
- I. **Priorities**
 - a. **Preserve and improve routes with medium-high ridership**
 - i. Reduce/eliminate unproductive or non-competitive routes
 - b. Preserve and improve commercial corridor routes
 - c. Extend Rapid Transit lines 5 miles
 - i. Include fair priced parking lot at the end of the lines
 - d. **Frequency and reliability are crucial**
 - e. **Maintain existing rail lines**
 - f. Make all stations accessible

Goal 3: Stay Competitive

This goal focuses on the vital role that transit plays as part of the region’s mobility network and strategies for adapting to the evolving needs of riders. *Invest in Transit* identifies eight strategies to compete:

- 1) Improve system-wide bus speed and reliability
- 2) Advance premium bus priority corridors
- 3) Invest in technology
- 4) Pursue regulation of private mobility providers
- 5) Invest in continued Ventra mobile app development
- 6) Conduct research, policy analysis, and pilots
- 7) Collect and share more transit related data
- 8) Make small improvements

Survey respondents were first asked to select the “...most important strategies identified in *Invest in Transit* which will enable regional transit to Stay Competitive, based on your view on travel behavior and transit ridership in the next one to two years.” Table A2.2 shows selected strategies to compete by scenario response.

Table A2.2: Selected Strategies to Compete by Scenario Response

Strategies to Compete	Stalled Economy	Congested Recovery	Regional Remix
Improve system-wide bus speed and reliability	13	18	3
Advance premium bus priority corridors	8	15	2
Invest in technology	6	9	1
Pursue regulation of private mobility providers	2	2	0
Invest in continued Ventra mobile app development	5	7	4
Conduct research, policy analysis, and pilots	5	6	2
Collect and share more transit related data	3	2	2
Make small improvements	6	8	4

Additionally, Goal 3 asked participants to “... identify additional strategies for regional transit to Stay Competitive...”

For clarity responses have been grouped by general themes that emerged in the open-ended responses, again using color coding to indicate scenario response.

A. Technology

- a. Spend more on technology to ensure a good rider experience and quality of service even if there are service cuts
- b. Advance Traffic Signal Coordination on priority corridors
- c. Maximize bus route performance through signal pre-emption
- d. Fare card readers for rear-door boarding
- e. **Real-time information on crowding**
- f. Ventra
 - i. Let riders reserve and pay for many kinds of rides on the platform (including TNC)
 - ii. Use across regional modes
- g. Tap on/off payment for Metra

B. Marketing/Messaging

- a. **Transit should be reliable and competitive for commuters and tourists**
 - i. Messaging about speed, efficiency, safety, reliability
 - ii. **Communication about sanitation and safety**
 - iii. Market buses as viable transportation
- b. Get people excited to return to transit
- c. Remind people of value to transit in past/future lives

- d. Attract new riders
- e. **Frequent rider program**
 - i. Points to get discounts on monthly passes, merchandise, gift cards
- C. New first and last mile opportunities
 - a. Subsidize TNC/Taxi for connections CTA stations
 - b. Small, distributed fleet of shared vehicles at key stations and transfer hubs
 - i. Replaces shuttles or infrequent mid-day long haul service
 - c. Partner with private operators to provide service from Metra stations
 - d. Private bus operators
 - e. Improve last-mile regional coordination
- D. Fares
 - a. **Strategies that accurately price all mobility options**
 - i. (congestion pricing, parking) to educate users and improve decision making
 - b. Free fares
 - c. Review public transit parking pricing
 - d. Review commuter shuttle pricing
 - e. Metra Electric – lower price
 - f. Stop requiring full fares for transfers
 - g. **Integrated fare system**
 - i. Accelerate CUBIC contract
- E. Service should be flexible to changing demand
 - a. **Non-fixed routes**
 - i. Fixed route when demand warrants, switch to demand-response during low periods.
 - ii. Partner with TNC's for where fixed routes don't serve well
 - b. Re-allocate equipment and assets from reduced/eliminated routes to support key routes
- F. Focus on bus service
 - a. Low-cost improvement
 - b. **Dedicated bus lanes or shoulder service**
 - i. Stay competitive with cars in traffic
 - ii. Improve reliability and speed
 - iii. Change parking and zoning requirements
 - c. Express buses to the end of the rapid transit line with inexpensive transfers to CTA rail
 - d. All-door boarding
 - e. More express buses
 - f. **More Pulse service**
 - g. Support suburban bus service for manufacturing/health workers

G. New Mobility

- a. Shared ride options to “bridge” corridors
- b. Partner with TNCs
- c. Pursue regulation of private mobility providers**
- d. Single width, leased, socially distant, electric transit
 - i. Electric scooters that can use bike lanes
 - ii. Electric bikes
 - iii. Shared thin electric cars

H. Respond to changed market

- a. Use now-vacant mall parking lots for park and ride for new express bus to O’Hare
- b. Metra needs to be reinvented; rethink vehicle size, power supply, track ownership, labor agreements. Change cost structure so frequent service can be operated cost-effectively.

I. Improvements

- a. Invest in shelters and stations to be heated
- b. Collaborate with community groups to improve stations and facilities
- c. Upgrade stations and equipment
- d. Improve signage
- e. Collect and share more data
- f. Focus on small improvements
- g. Customer centered perspective to make riding easier
- h. Curb management strategies

J. Regional Collaboration and Coordination

- a. Paratransit network/TNC’s to connect Metra, CTA, Pace