Table of Contents

2 | What is the RTA?
3 | RTA Tools
4 | 2013 RTA Community Accomplishments
5 | RTA Regional Benefits
7 | RTA Strategic Plan
10 | RTA Success Stories
What is the RTA?

The RTA provides financial oversight, funding and planning for the Chicago Transit Authority’s (CTA) bus and rail, Metra commuter rail, Pace suburban bus and Pace ADA paratransit service. The Agency was created in 1974 by a referendum of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will county residents in Northeastern Illinois. The RTA is a special purpose unit of local government and a municipal corporation of the State of Illinois. The RTA’s mission is to ensure a financially sound, comprehensive and coordinated public transportation system for Northeastern Illinois.

RTA Facts and Figures

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is the third largest public transportation system in North America, providing more than two million rides each weekday to a regional population of approximately eight million people throughout six counties with 7,200 route miles.

Purpose

The RTA offers planning, capital and operating funds to transit service providers, local governments and other agencies. The funds support programs and projects to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the region’s transit system for both frequent and occasional riders.

The RTA administers three funding programs used to finance projects that provide better mobility for all, with special consideration for older adults and people with disabilities, and improve access to jobs for the traditional and reverse commuter.

Planning

Planning funds and technical assistance help communities develop a vision and plan for improving their future. These planning tools enable communities to assess existing conditions of a transportation corridor or an area around a transit station to identify its strengths and weaknesses, and develop and implement a plan to improve the area. The plans are used by the community to guide its decisions and actions. Examples of planning projects include station access improvement plans, transit corridor plans, zoning updates and transit-oriented development plans.

Capital

Capital funds help agencies and communities make infrastructure improvements in preparation for a new service, or for improvements that compliment an existing service, by making it more accessible and easier to use. Capital projects are usually tangible and can be constructed or installed. Examples of capital improvements include the purchase of a new vehicle, installation of information displays at bus stops or rail stations, or the construction of a new bus stop or train platform.

Operating

Operating funds help agencies and communities by providing or enhancing a service used by the general public. These services are often a result of a previously completed plan. Examples of operating assistance funds include support of door-to-door transportation service, a customer service center, or increasing service on an existing bus route.

RTA Tools

The RTA offers planning, capital and operating funds to transit service providers, local governments and other agencies. The funds support programs and projects to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the region’s transit system for both frequent and occasional riders.

The RTA administers three funding programs used to finance projects that provide better mobility for all, with special consideration for older adults and people with disabilities, and improve access to jobs for the traditional and reverse commuter.

Planning

Planning funds and technical assistance help communities develop a vision and plan for improving their future. These planning tools enable communities to assess existing conditions of a transportation corridor or an area around a transit station to identify its strengths and weaknesses, and develop and implement a plan to improve the area. The plans are used by the community to guide its decisions and actions. Examples of planning projects include station access improvement plans, transit corridor plans, zoning updates and transit-oriented development plans.

Capital

Capital funds help agencies and communities make infrastructure improvements in preparation for a new service, or for improvements that compliment an existing service, by making it more accessible and easier to use. Capital projects are usually tangible and can be constructed or installed. Examples of capital improvements include the purchase of a new vehicle, installation of information displays at bus stops or rail stations, or the construction of a new bus stop or train platform.

Operating

Operating funds help agencies and communities by providing or enhancing a service used by the general public. These services are often a result of a previously completed plan. Examples of operating assistance funds include support of door-to-door transportation service, a customer service center, or increasing service on an existing bus route.
RTA-Supported Programs and Projects Led to...

- More than 876,000 Million Total Rides
- 2 Zoning Code Updates
- 4 Transit Stops or Stations Built or Improved
- 7 Economic Development Advisory Panels
- 110 Individuals Travel Trained
- 40 Rail Station Public Address Systems Installed
- More than 1,400 New Dwelling Units Constructed
- More than 1,300 New Dwelling Units Approved to be Built
- 478,000 Trips Booked via Pace’s Consolidated Call Center
- More than 150 Real-Time Customer Information Displays Installed
- $18 Million in Federal Dollars Secured to Fund Access to Transit Improvements (recommended in previously completed planning studies)
- More than 277,400 Square Feet of New Commercial Space Approved or Constructed

666.1 million trips were taken in 2012 on public transportation in the Chicago region. It’s the highest annual ridership number since 1990.

$11,839 is saved every year by households in the Chicago region that use public transportation.

6.7 million metric tons of carbon emissions are not released into the region’s atmosphere every year because people use the public transportation system. This is equal to if 86% of the households in the City of Chicago were to stop using electricity for an entire year.

750 million gallons of gasoline are saved annually in the Chicago region because people choose to take public transportation.

16 cents of every dollar is spent in the average household on transportation. Ninety-four percent of this goes toward buying, maintaining and operating personal automobiles and is the largest expenditure after housing.
The RTA’s Strategic Plan

The RTA developed a strategic plan in partnership with the CTA, Metra and Pace (the Service Boards), as the agency recognized the need for a unified regional vision for the transit system. The plan contains a vision, goals and objectives to shape and direct much of transit’s strategic activities in the region. In collaboration with the Service Boards, the RTA regularly updates the strategic plan to reflect its accomplishments and to continue to anticipate the region’s future needs.

The strategic plan identifies the key actions the RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace need to take to achieve four primary goals:

- Provide valuable, reliable, accessible and attractive transportation options
- Ensure financial viability of the transit system
- Promote a green, livable, and prosperous region
- Continue to be advocates and trusted stewards of public transportation.

There are five strategic plan objectives:

1. Provide public transportation choices that link people to jobs, education, services, cultural activities and other life commitments.
2. Connect communities within the region through an enhanced and coordinated transit network that provides reliable and time-competitive transportation options.
3. Ensure that the transit system is more accessible and easier to use.
4. Provide a customer experience that offers modern amenities, utilizing state-of-the-art technology.
5. Encourage Transit-Oriented Development by partnering with communities, employers and other stakeholders.

The following pages contain examples of the important work the RTA did in 2013 and how it relates to these five objectives. All of these activities improve the transit experience for not only the typical daily transit rider, but also for more specific market groups the RTA is targeting: older adults, reverse commuters and occasional riders.
The RTA allocated federal New Freedom (NF) program grant dollars to the Ray Graham Association of Lisle in DuPage County which uses the funds to run its Safety Transportation Training Program. The program assesses and trains individuals with disabilities and older adults to safely utilize the various regional transportation services available to them. This work, which links people to jobs, schools, services and cultural activities, boosts independence and self-esteem, two key results of a successful training program. Over the past year, 100 individuals have been trained through this transportation training program.

The RTA is focusing efforts on ensuring adequate transportation options for the reverse commuter. With that goal in mind, the RTA awarded Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom (JARC/NF) program funds for two projects, the Pace/CTA Skokie Swift Willow Road Connector and the Pace I-90 Service Expansion, to enhance Pace bus service to reverse commuters traveling to suburban offices from a Metra train station. On August 19, 2013, Pace started operating service on a new route connecting riders from the CTA Yellow Line (Skokie Swift) Dempster Station to employers along the Willow Road corridor in northern Cook County. On the same day, Pace expanded bus routes 600 (Northwest Express) and 610 (Prairie Stone Express) to provide bi-directional service aimed to attract reverse commuters instead of the previous one-directional service that was aimed at the traditional commuter. The average number of daily riders during the first three full months of service increased 28%.

“Not only have our overall ridership levels increased dramatically, but we have increased the general satisfaction of our employee base by offering a commute option for employees residing in Chicago.” —Chelsea A. Mathis, Facility Division Manager

—Allstate Insurance
With Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom (JARC/NF) program funds awarded through the RTA, the Lake County Northwest Demonstration Project began in January, 2010, to provide transportation service in the Lake County northwest townships of Antioch, Avon, Grant, and Lake Villa. These services allow transit-dependent people who cannot use buses and trains to reserve door-to-door service for greater access to employment opportunities. The service recently expanded to the townships of Fremont and Wauconda.

A portion of the service is flexible and can deviate from following a specified fixed-route, thereby connecting travelers to three Metra stations on the North Central Service line, and Milwaukee District North line.

With Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom (JARC/NF) program funds awarded through the RTA, McHenry County teamed up with local agencies, including the RTA, to offer “MCRide.” This expanded transit service allows transit-dependent individuals who cannot use buses and trains to reserve door-to-door service to make trips across geographic boundaries, including Greenwood and Dorr Townships. Built upon previous individual services offered by the Crystal Lake, McHenry, and Woodstock municipalities, as well as older adult transportation provided by McHenry Township, this combined service is now integrated and coordinated into one easy-to-use program.

From January through May, 2013, passengers using this system boarded a MCRide vehicle 35,357 times, setting the pace for a total of over 84,000 annual boardings in 2013.
Ride DuPage is an innovative transportation-to-work program that provides bus or taxi service for people who need travel assistance due to physical or cognitive limitations. This program enables people to obtain and maintain employment through more affordable transportation options. Subsidized by Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom (JARC/NF) program funding awarded through the RTA, and a partnership of townships, cities, villages, Pace and DuPage County, Ride DuPage offers curb-to-curb transportation, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at significantly reduced rates.

Through August, 2013, passengers using this system boarded a Ride DuPage vehicle 18,527 times, setting the pace for 28,000 annual boardings in 2013.

RTA Programs:

Pace Bus Stop Improvements

“The Through the Community Planning program, Kane County received valuable planning assistance and was able to strengthen collaborative partnerships with the local municipalities and transit providers. These partnerships have led to securing nearly $2 million worth of investments in transit infrastructure throughout the study area and beyond.”—Mike Sullivan, Chief of Planning and Programming —Kane County Division of Transportation

The RTA contributed funds to multiple projects within the region to increase system accessibility. Infrastructure improvements at bus stop locations such as sidewalks, concrete waiting areas that include shelters, benches and other amenities to use while waiting improve the transit environment and make the system more appealing. Along Pace Bus Route 529 Randall Road in Kane County, bus stops have been improved thanks to the allocation of funds awarded through the RTA’s Innovation, Coordination, and Enhancement (ICE) program. Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom (JARC/NF) program funds were also awarded through the RTA to Pace for the installation of sidewalks, concrete waiting areas and shelters to create accessible pathways to these stops. Infrastructure improvements have been made at 70 bus stop locations throughout the Pace system through these two projects.

DuPage County’s Door-to-Door Service

FUNDING SINCE 2010

$80,000

Pace: $20,000

JARC/NF Program: $600,000

Total: $700,000

FUNDING SINCE 2007

JARC/NF Program: $1,719,970

DuPage County: $1,719,970

Total: $3,439,940

FUNDING SINCE 2010

FUNDING SINCE 2007

More than 28,000 annual boardings in 2013

Through August, 2013, passengers using this system boarded a Ride DuPage vehicle 18,527 times, setting the pace for 28,000 annual boardings in 2013.
Real-Time Schedule Information

State-of-the-art technology is a key component to transit rider satisfaction and is important in attracting new riders to the system. Through the RTA Innovation, Coordination and Enhancement (ICE) program, this project supports the CTA’s efforts to install digital customer information displays at bus stops and rail stations throughout the CTA system. In 2013, 153 digital displays were installed to provide real-time bus arrival and train arrival information, system status updates and CTA customer alerts.

This information is interspersed with paid advertisements, which supports the operation of the displays, as well as provides time and weather information.

Pace Call Center

With the assistance of the Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom (JARC/NF) program funds awarded by the RTA, Pace is consolidating multiple call centers to increase efficiency and create more centralized call centers. Door-to-door services meet an important regional need, allowing riders to call a system representative to schedule transportation when it is not possible for the resident to use buses and trains. Therefore, there must be call centers in the region, staffed with professionals who can arrange this transportation. The newest consolidated call center utilizes the most recent technological advancements to promote, enhance and facilitate access to transportation services, including the integration and coordination of services for individuals with disabilities, older adults and low-income individuals.

The call center funded by this program now serves paratransit services including ADA paratransit services in DuPage, Kane and Will counties.
The RTA partners with local communities to plan developments near rail stations that will attract more riders to the transit system. The RTA has funded two studies in the Village of Orland Park. One is the Orland Park Transit-Oriented Development Planning Study, funded by the RTA Community Planning program, which created a plan to facilitate mixed-use development in the New Downtown Orland Park area, near the 143rd Street Metra Station with a specific focus on 36-acres adjacent to the station. The second study was the completion of the federally funded Orland Park LaGrange Road Transit Improvement Plan. This project identifies transit and pedestrian-friendly improvements for development along the heavily used LaGrange Road corridor from 131st Street to Interstate 80, a corridor providing access to the 143rd Street Station.

Following recommendations from the Transit-Oriented Development study, in 2011 the Village approved a 295-unit apartment development with ground floor retail adjacent to the 143rd Street Metra Station. Construction is complete. As a result of the LaGrange Road plan, the Illinois Department of Transportation has reconstructed the intersection of 143rd Street to include enhanced pedestrian features and a pedestrian overpass near the Metra station. Reconstruction of the remainder of the corridor will begin soon.

Based on a methodology developed by RTA staff, the new apartment development has the potential to add an additional 61,920 annual boardings at the 143rd Street Metra Station.

Federal Funding: $79,884
RTA Community Planning: $30,000
Village of Orland Park: $39,971
Total: $149,855

The RTA funded the Village of Wheeling’s Station Area Plan to redevelop the area around the Metra station to be a more transit-friendly area. The plan identifies more appropriate and compatible uses of the land such as a mix of residential, commercial and retail development, improving pedestrian access, and alleviating congestion. The study also determines the development potential of the area and provides realistic development strategies for the Village to implement.

Following recommendations from the Station Area Plan, in 2008 the Village completed land acquisition near the Metra station to create a downtown center. In September, 2013, the Village gave preliminary approval to a development company for a $100 million development that will include a 300-unit, 5-story apartment complex, along with retail and commercial development adjacent to the Metra Station, transforming the area into Wheeling’s new town center. The first phase of construction is expected to start in the summer of 2014.

Based on a methodology developed by RTA staff, this new development has the potential to add an additional 63,840 annual boardings at the Wheeling Station.

Funding since 2002:
- Federal Allocation: $60,000
- Village of Wheeling: $15,000
- Total: $75,000

Potential Ridership Increase: 63,840 additional annual boardings
The RTA’s Work in Your Area

- Blue Island
- Buffalo Grove
- Chicago
- Clarendon Hills
- DuPage County
- Fox River Grove
- Hanover Township
- Joliet
- Kane County
- Lake County
- Manhattan
- McHenry County
- Mundelein
- Naperville
- New Lenox
- Orland Park
- Park Forest
- Richton Park
- Skokie
- Villa Park
- Wheeling
- Will County

For more information about the RTA’s implementation activities, please go to www.rtamss.org/rtamss/planningHome.jsp