

Theresa Mah

State Representative • 24th District
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April 4, 2024

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
EPA Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Subject: Support for Carbon Pollution Reduction Grant – Transforming Transit: Accelerating a Zero-Emission Fleet in the Chicago Region

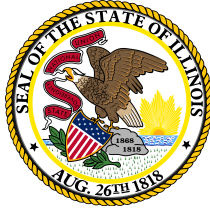
Dear Administrator Regan,

We, the undersigned members of the Illinois House of Representatives representing the Chicago region and its transit network, which provides over 1.2 million trips per day, are writing to express our support for the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in their application for Carbon Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) implementation funding of \$375 million for the Transforming Transit: Accelerating a Zero-Emission Fleet in the Chicago Region initiative. RTA's project, in collaboration with the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, and Pace, will build on ongoing regional collaboration to reduce emissions, enhance bus and train service, and increase ridership.

Public transit plays a crucial role in advancing regional climate, economic, and equity goals. Our transit system serves as an economic differentiator, connecting talent to opportunities and fostering growth. In the face of a climate crisis, RTA and the region's transit agencies acknowledge their responsibility to encourage more people to use public transit and transition their fleets of buses and locomotives to zero-emission vehicles. Furthermore, the transit system serves as a vital tool in addressing the legacy of racism and segregation in the Chicago region, which has disproportionately burdened people of color and individuals with low incomes with poor air quality and limited access to jobs and services.

With \$375 million in CPRG funding allocated for Transforming Transit, the RTA plans to make the following investments with each operator:

- \$125 million for CTA to purchase up to fifty 60-foot articulated buses and two charging cabinets supporting up to 40 pantograph chargers to be housed in their 103rd Street garage. These buses will serve at least two of the 25 routes originating in the historic Pullman neighborhood on Chicago's Far Southeast Side, an area with a history of disadvantage and high pollution burdens.
- \$125 million for Pace to purchase up to eighty-three 40-foot buses to be housed in their North (Waukegan) and Southwest (Bridgeview) Division garages and deployed along 23 routes. Waukegan and Bridgeview are historically disadvantaged communities vulnerable to pollution and air quality issues.
- \$125 million for Metra to purchase 32 trailer cars and 8 docking stations, allowing Metra to retire 16 of its oldest diesel locomotives and add service on three high-ridership lines: Union Pacific North, Milwaukee District West, and the Rock Island Beverly Branch.



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The RTA region encompasses a broad geography and diverse population. The introduction of new zero-emission vehicles and train sets will benefit not only riders, who will experience more reliable service with modern equipment, but also residents living in nearby communities who will enjoy cleaner air. In alignment with the Biden Administration's Justice 40 Initiative, the RTA, CTA, Metra, and Pace are committed to prioritizing investments in historically disadvantaged areas. In the fight against climate change, these operators are aligning their transition to zero-emissions with this mission, deploying improvements primarily in communities burdened by poor air quality and environmental justice issues.

This project will significantly contribute to the region's goals of reducing the environmental footprint of the transportation sector and moving towards a more sustainable network while prioritizing communities burdened by poor air quality. For these reasons, we strongly urge the U.S. EPA to fully consider RTA's proposal for Transforming Transit: Accelerating a Zero-Emission Fleet in the Chicago Region under the applicable guidelines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theresa Mah". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Theresa Mah, Ph.D.
Illinois State Representative - 24th District