

April 1, 2024

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

RE: 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 Senate who represent the Chicago region and its transit network that provides over 1.2 million trips per day, write to support 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 partnership with the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, and Pace, will build on ongoing regional collaboration to reduce emissions, enhance bus and train service, and grow ridership.

Public transit plays a critical role in advancing regional climate, economic, and equity goals. Our transit system is an economic differentiator – linking talent to opportunities and spurring growth. Amidst a climate crisis, RTA and the region's transit agencies recognize their role in getting more people to ride public transit and transition their fleets of buses and locomotives to zero-emissions. The transit system is also an essential tool to address a legacy of racism and segregation in the Chicago region that has left people of color and people experiencing low incomes overburdened with poor air quality and inadequate access to jobs and services.

With \$375 million in CPRG funding for ***Transforming Transit***, the RTA will work with each of the operators to make the following investments:

- **\$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 and used to support service for at least two of 25 routes originating in the historic Pullman neighborhood on Chicago's Far Southeast Side – a historically disadvantaged community and one of the areas of greatest concern for pollution burdens and vulnerability.
- **\$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** that will allow 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.


The RTA region is broad in its geography and diversity of the populations served. Populations benefiting from new zero-emission vehicles and trainsets include riders, who experience more reliable service with modern equipment, as well as residents living in nearby communities who will breathe cleaner air. In line with the Biden Administration's Justice 40 Initiative, the RTA, CTA, Metra, and Pace have committed to prioritizing investments in historically disadvantaged areas. In combatting climate change, the operators have aligned their transition to zero-emissions with this mission, largely deploying improvements in communities burdened by poor air quality and environmental justice issues first.

This project will make significant progress on the region's goals to decrease the environmental footprint of the transportation sector and move toward a more sustainable network while prioritizing communities burdened by poor air quality. For these reasons, we urge U.S. EPA's full consideration of RTA's proposal for ***Transforming Transit: Accelerating a Zero-Emission Fleet in the Chicago Region*** under the applicable guidelines.

Sincerely,



Senator Ram Villivalam,
8th District



Senator Laura Fine,
9th District