



PURSUING HEALTHY LUNGS AND
CLEAN AIR FOR ALL

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,

On behalf of the Respiratory Health Association, please accept this letter of 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 partnership with the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, and Pace Suburban Bus, will build on ongoing regional collaboration to reduce emissions, improve health, enhance bus and train service, and grow ridership.

Public transit plays a critical role in advancing regional climate, air quality, economic, and equity goals. Chicago’s regional transit system is an economic engine – 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 the need to transition their fleets of buses and locomotives to zero-emission status. 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 sixty 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.

Respiratory Health Association’s mission is to prevent lung disease, promote clean air and help people live better through education, research, and policy change. Our vision

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is healthy lungs and clean air for all. Because of the health threats they pose, air quality and climate change are two of our main areas of policy focus. We actively work and support efforts to create a reliable, zero-emission Chicago region public transit system.

While these projects have direct pollution reduction benefits for several Chicago area communities where affected routes and stations are located, they will also benefit the larger region by reducing emissions, improving air quality, and improving health outcomes by reducing the burden of lung disease. Reducing emissions from transit vehicles while simultaneously reducing emissions from personal vehicles as people use an upgraded and more reliable transit system will help achieve the region's goals to decrease the transportation sector environmental footprint. These actions will provide disproportionate benefits to communities that now face the highest burdens from poor air quality.

For these reasons, Respiratory Health Association urges 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 CPRG guidelines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian P. Urbaszewski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

Brian P. Urbaszewski
Director, Environmental Health Programs