



6701 South Archer Road  
Bedford Park, Illinois 60501

P: 708-701-2232  
F: 708-458-2079

## Southwest Conference of MAYORS

April 4, 2024

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Village of Bedford Park  
City of Blue Island  
Village of Bridgeview  
City of Burbank  
Village of Chicago Ridge  
Village of Crestwood  
Village of Evergreen Park  
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**Victoria A. Smith**

Executive Director

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 Southwest Conference of Mayors (SCM), 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, will build on ongoing regional collaboration to reduce emissions, enhance bus and train service, and grow ridership.

*The Southwest Conference of Mayors is a body of duly elected officials representing twenty-one communities in the southwest suburban Cook County with a population in excess of 350,000.*

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.

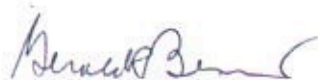
With \$375 million in CPRG funding for *Transforming Transit*, the RTA will work with each of the operators to make the following investments:

- **\$125 million for CTA to purchase up to sixty 60-foot articulated buses and two charging cabinets supporting up to 40 pantograph chargers** to be housed in their 103<sup>rd</sup> 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 SCM represents 21 communities across Cook County working together for the betterment of the entire southwest suburban area. Area residents benefiting from new zero-emission vehicles and trainsets include riders, who will experience more reliable service with modern equipment, along with the greater population living in nearby communities who will breathe cleaner air. While these projects have direct benefits to 17 SCM communities where affected routes and stations are located, together, CTA, Metra, and Pace's initiatives go beyond municipal borders and benefit the entire region in reducing emissions and improving air quality, and enhancing service to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips.

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, I 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gerald Bennett".

Gerald Bennett  
Mayor, City of Palos Hills  
President, Southwest Conference of Mayors