

April 5, 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 Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club, 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.

Public transit plays a critical role in advancing statewide climate, economic, and equity goals. Chicago's regional 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 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 Sierra Club is the most enduring and influential grassroots environmental organization in the United States. We amplify the power of our millions of members and supporters to defend everyone's right to a healthy world. Transportation contributes approximately one-third of all U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, and must be a prime target for major greenhouse gas reductions. Global warming emissions from the transportation sector can be reduced by increasing the production and use of clean, highly efficient vehicles powered by sustainable low carbon fuels and electricity, and by better designing communities to include accessible and convenient alternatives to driving. Reliable, zero emission public transit is central to achieving progress.

While these projects have direct benefits to several Chicago area communities where affected routes and

stations are located, together, CTA, Metra, and Pace's initiatives go beyond neighborhood borders and benefit the entire state in reducing emissions and improving air quality, and enhancing service to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips.

This project will make significant progress on the state'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 black ink that reads "Jack Darin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jack Darin
Director
Sierra Club Illinois