

# RTA Travel Information Action Plan 2025

Transportation Tuesday Webinar  
August 5, 2025



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# Background

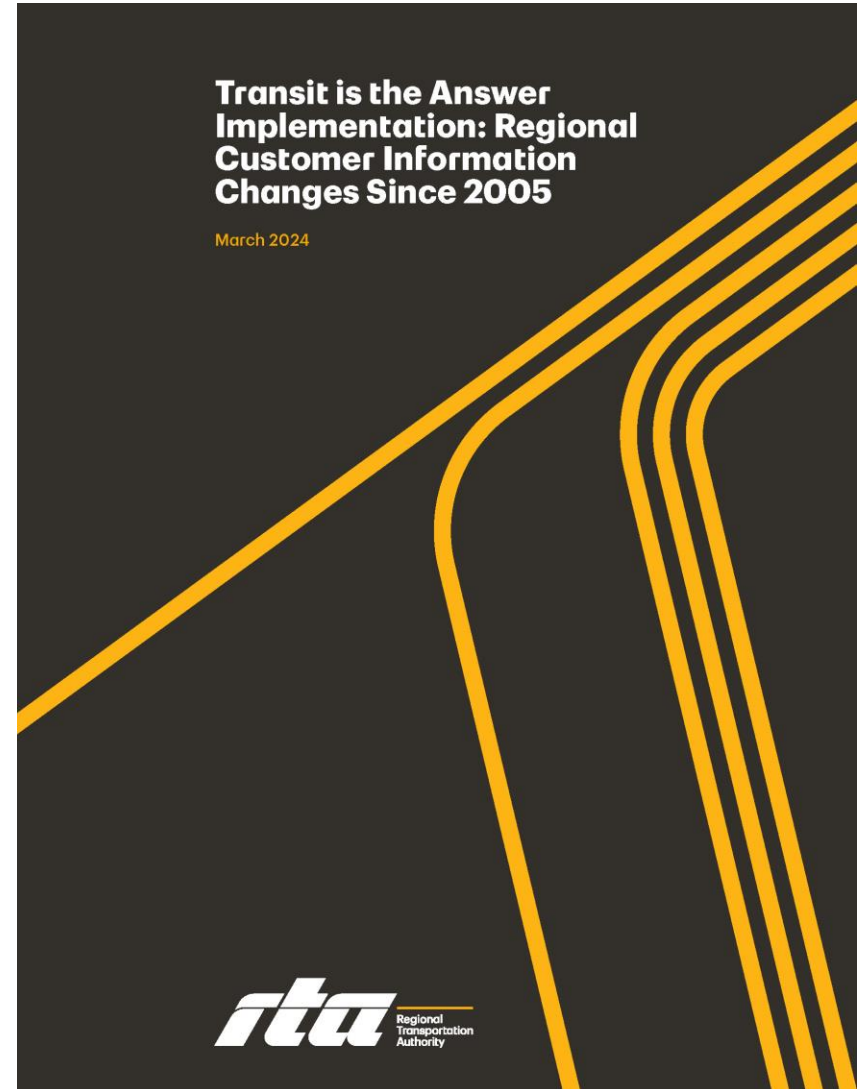
- Transit Is The Answer Action Item (2023):
  - *Provide more accurate, real-time travel information for riders*
- We expanded the scope to include a review and assessment of all information provided to transit riders



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# Project Tasks

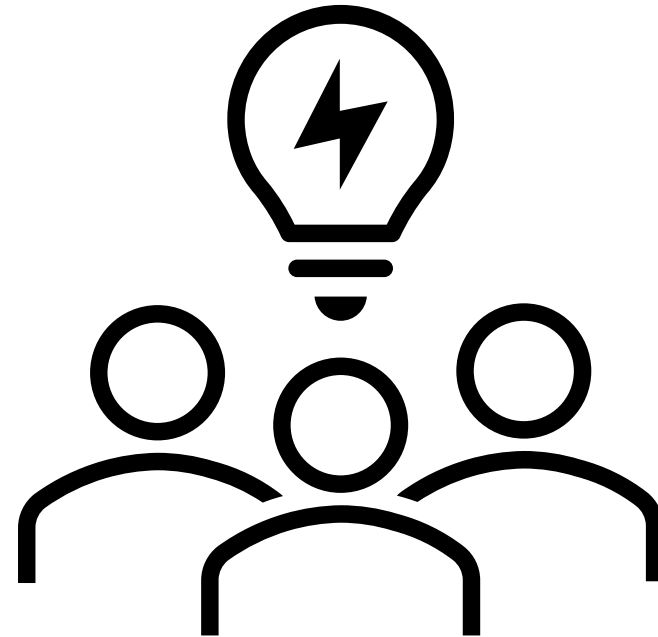
- Steering Committee Engagement
- Customer Information Inventory
- Review Customer Information Changes Since 2005 RTA Research
- Update Foundational User Experience (UX) Research
- Transit Customer User Experience Testing
- Identify Coordination Opportunities
- Develop Action Plan



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# Steering Committee Engagement

- Transit Is the Answer Coalition Members
  - *Active Transportation Alliance*
  - *Better Streets Chicago*
  - *University of Notre Dame*
  - *Commuters Take Action*
- RTA Citizens Advisory Board
- CTA, Metra, Pace and RTA Staff



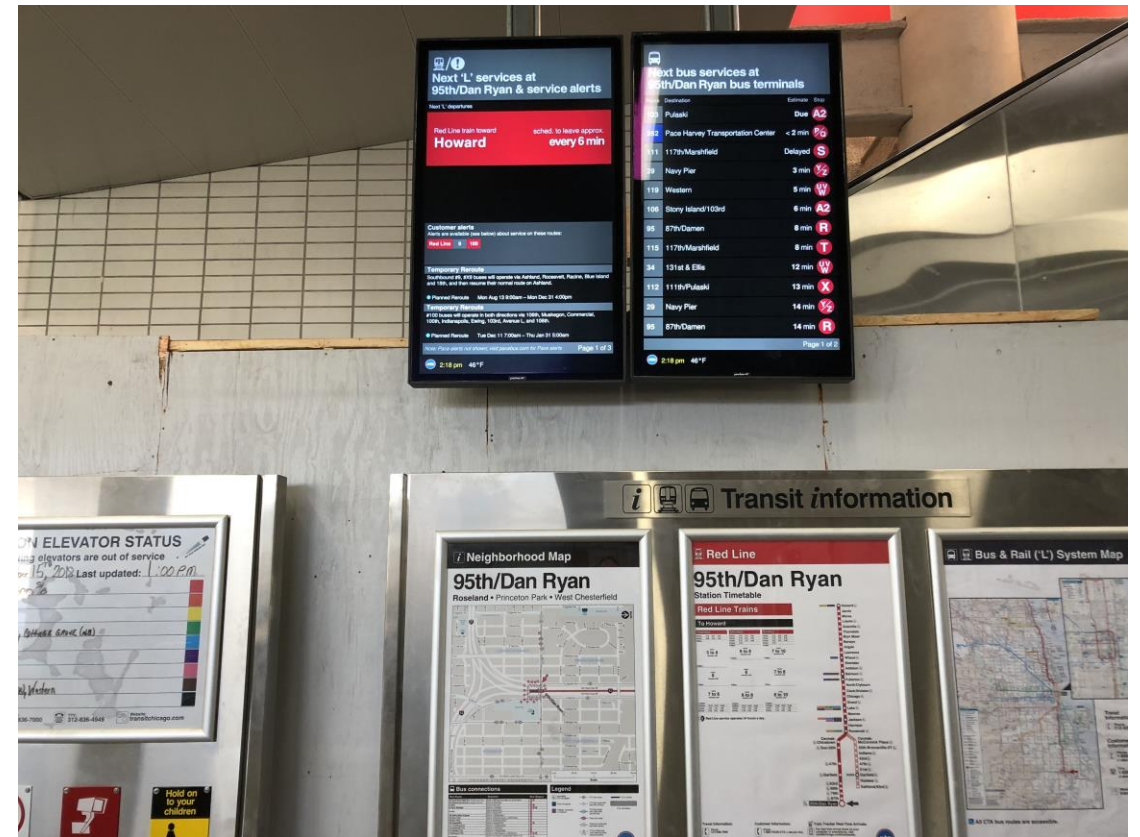
# Customer Information Inventory

- All customer-facing information and processes provided by the CTA, Metra, Pace, and the RTA
  - Communication methods
  - Services
  - Websites
  - Hardware



# Key Takeaways: Inventory & Quantification Report

- CTA, Metra, and Pace are expanding the use of dynamic display technology.
- Delivery of real-time arrival information is common for single mode locations.
- Hardware and vendor/contractor solutions vary by agency.
- Arrival times for connecting service and interagency transfers remains a challenge.



# Review Customer Information Changes Since 2005

- RTA Staff reviewed the 2005 Foundational User Research / Rider Experience report and identified:
  - *What recommendations were completed?*
  - *What recommendations were not completed?*
  - *What has changed since the report was published?*

Foundational Research  
*The Rider Experience*



**Regional  
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Authority**

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**CONIFER**

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Evanston, Illinois 60202  
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June 2005

# Update Foundational User Experience (UX) Research

- 3 Key Findings:
  - Digital interfaces are an extension of the transit network.
  - Consistency is required and redundancy is preferred.
  - Every transit employee is a potential source of transit customer information.
- Best Practices in User Experience (UX) Design



# User Experience Testing – Overview

## Tasks

- Participant Selection
- Pre-Trip Interview
- Trip Planning
- User Observation
- Post-Trip Interview
- Summary Findings

**Instructions**

The RTA wants to better understand how our information and communications currently serve travelers. To help us achieve this goal, we've created this passport to complete the rest of the survey. Any additional comments are welcome.

...Using this evaluation criteria.

**1 Availability**  
Are you able to easily and efficiently locate and access information and communications?

**2 Comfort**  
Does the available information and communications help you feel at ease at this point of your journey? For example, did stop and station announcements help assure that you were traveling on the correct bus or train?

**3 Availability**  
Are you able to easily and efficiently locate and access information and communications? For example, were you able to obtain route information easily?

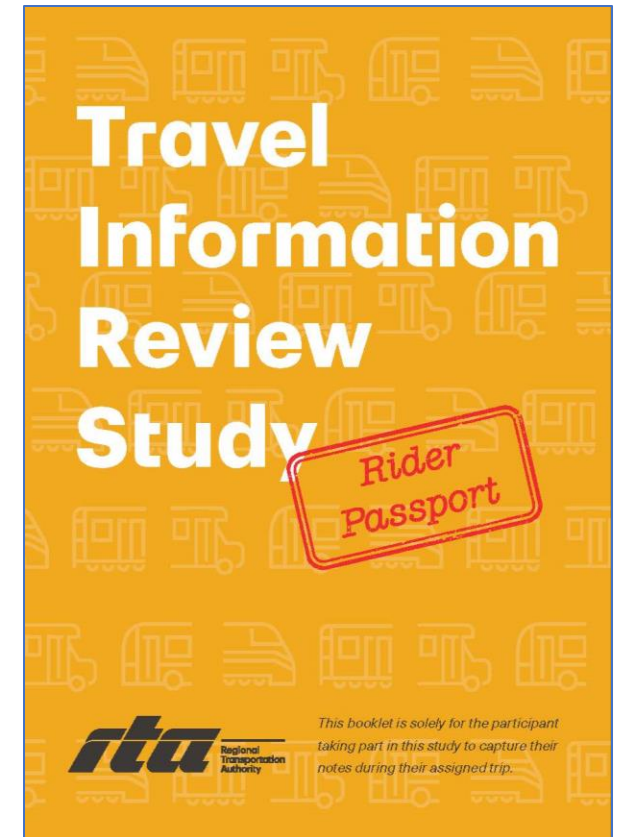
**4 Clarity**  
Are you able to hear, read, and understand communications clearly? For example, did you clearly hear and understand operator announcements?

**5 Accuracy**  
Are the real-time information and communications correctly displayed and posted? For example, did your train arrive at the estimated arrival time shown on a digital display?

**Transfer Point**

**Ending Point**

**Notes**



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# User Experience Testing – Participant Selection

## Diversity of User Background, Ability and Experience

- Age
- Ability (Vision, Hearing)
- Mobility Preferences
- Language Spoken at Home
- Familiarity with CTA, Metra, Pace, RTA
- Digital vs. Analog Preferences (i.e., smartphone users)

## 8 Participants



**Azia**



**Rohan**



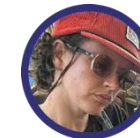
**Courtney**



**Sadie**



**David**



**Trini**



**Gris**

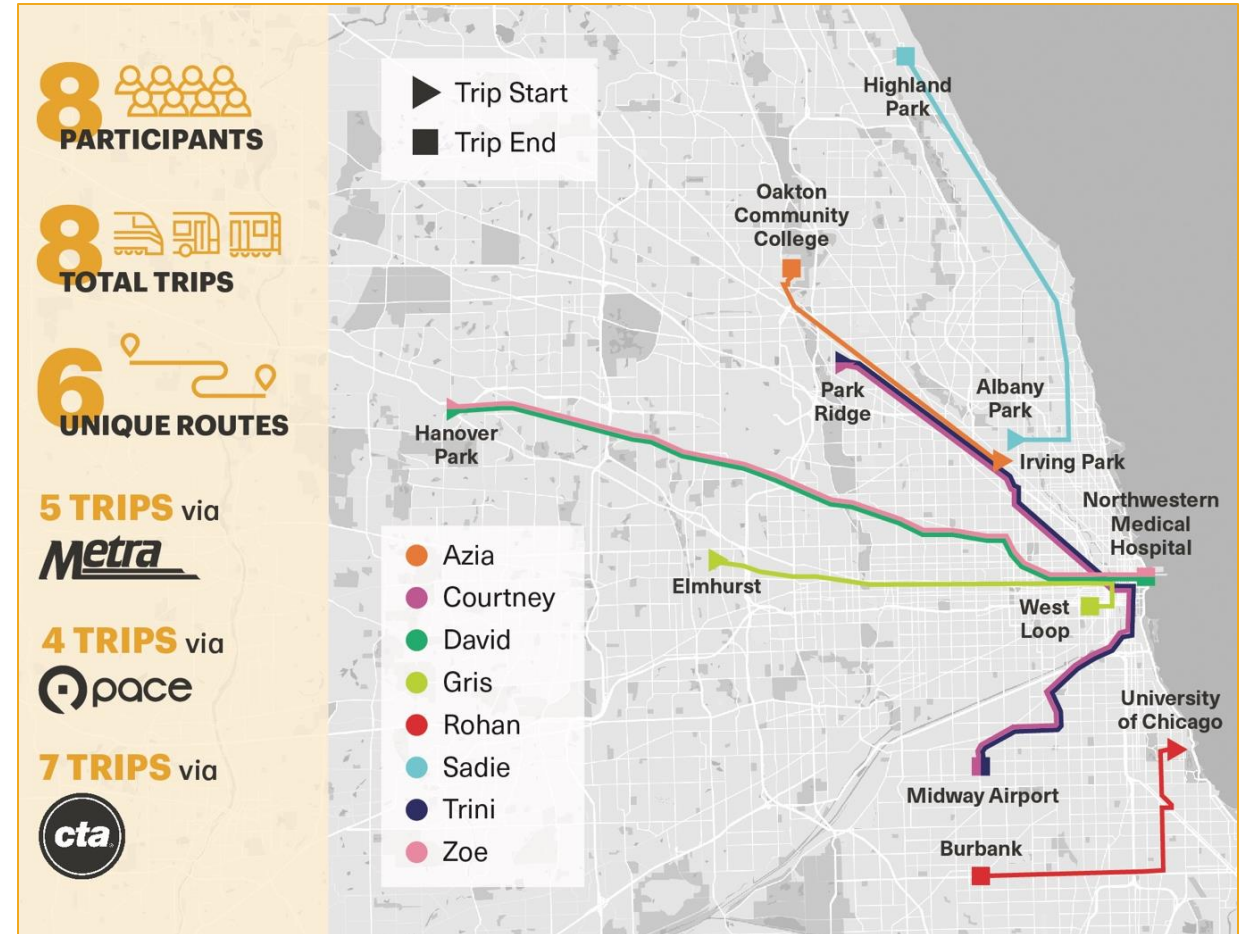


**Zoe**

# User Experience Testing – Ride-Alongs and Interviews

## Assigned Trips

1. Northwest Neighborhood to North Suburban College
2. North Side Neighborhood to North or Northwest Suburban Shopping District
3. Northwest Suburb to Downtown Hospital Campus
4. Western Suburb to Near Southwest Chicago Neighborhood
5. South Side Chicago Neighborhood to Southwest Suburb
6. City Neighborhood to City Airport



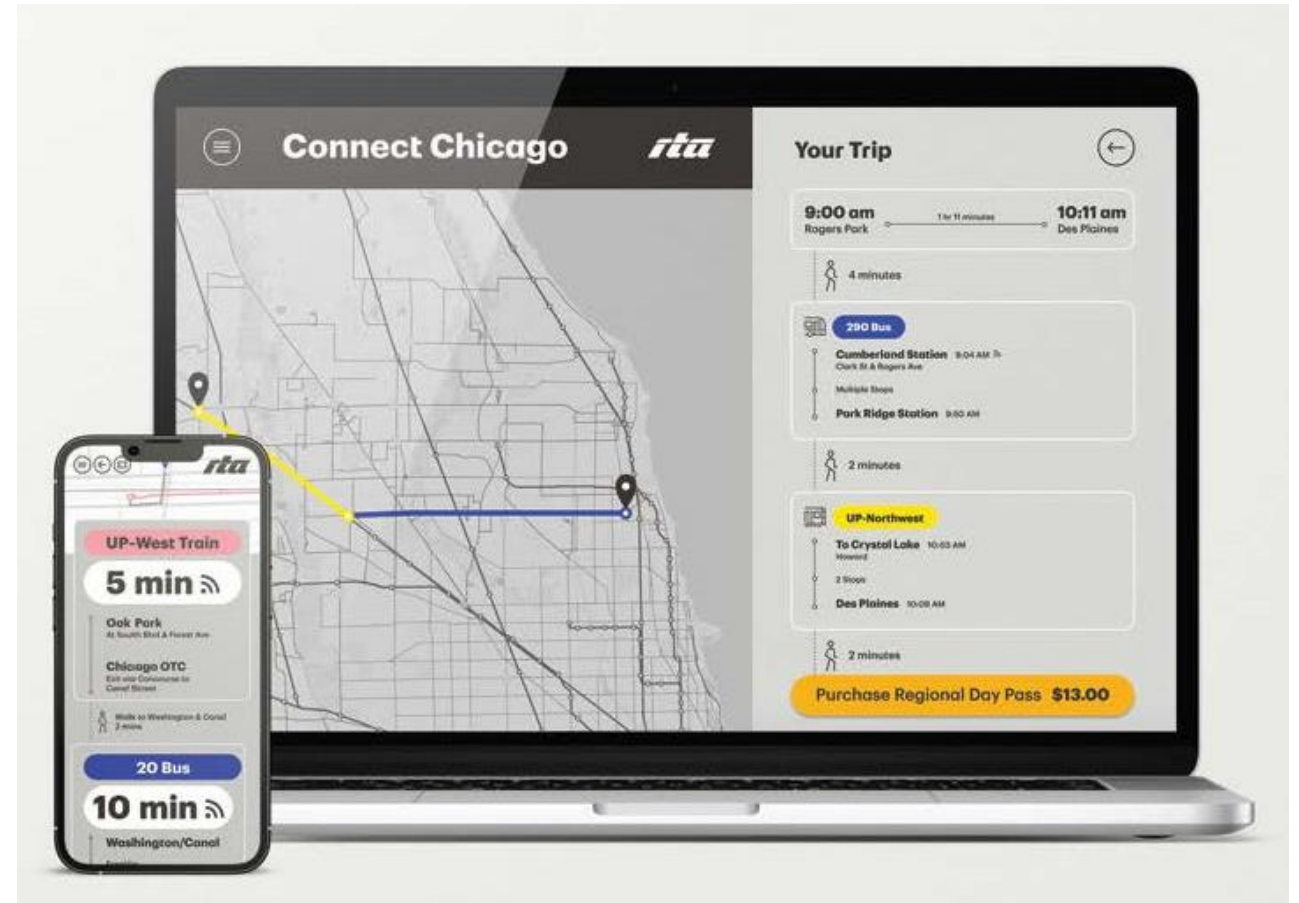
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# Identification of Further Coordination Opportunities

1. Increase coordination and consistency of customer information products and services
2. Develop a standard means of information reporting using the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS)
3. Improve delivery of service alerts
4. Expand utility of dynamic signage at stations and on transit vehicles
5. Refine communication strategies around special events
6. Improve interagency signage for clarity and accessibility
7. Improve dynamic audio and visual announcements at stations and in transit vehicles
8. Implement consistent language support across all Service Boards

# 1. Increase Coordination and Consistency of Products and Services

- 1.1 Continue Regional Coordination to Implement Advancements
- 1.2 Implement Regional Standards for Design and Information Reporting
- 1.3 Procure a Regional Fare Payment, Schedule, and Real-Time Information Application



## 2. Develop a Standard Means of Information Reporting Using GTFS (General Transit Feed Specification)



- 2.1 Report Delayed and Cancelled Trips (“Ghosting”)
- 2.2 Scheduled vs. Real-Time Arrivals
- 2.3 Improve Reporting of Vehicle Locations
- 2.4 Definition of When an Arrival is “Due”
- 2.5 Awareness of On Demand Services
- 2.6 Naming Conventions for Routes, Stops and Stations

The screenshot shows a digital display titled "Next services" with a close button in the top right corner. The display is divided into sections for different directions of travel. The first section is for "79th" station, with a sub-section for "Service toward Howard". It lists two services: "Red > Howard" which is currently "—" (not due), and another "Red > Howard" service which is "7 min" away. The second section is for "Service toward 95th", listing "Red > 95th/Dan Ryan" which is "Due", and another "Red > 95th/Dan Ryan" service which is "3 min" away.

Next services	
<b>79th</b>	
Service toward Howard	
Red > Howard	—
Red > Howard	7 min
Service toward 95th	
Red > 95th/Dan Ryan	Due
Red > 95th/Dan Ryan	3 min

## 3. Improve Delivery of Service Alerts

- 3.1 Standardize Communications Protocols for Service Alerts
- 3.2 Improve Staff Empowerment for Service Alerts

 **Announcement** 

# Routes 501, 505, 507 Detour Alert

**New Detour**

EFFECTIVE DATE  
Fri, 12/13/2024

**Starts Friday, December 13, 2024**

Due to closure of the Cass Street bridge over the Des Plaines River in Joliet for equipment upgrades, Routes 501, 505, and 507 will detour as follows:

**Routes 501 and 507 Westbound and Route 505 Clockwise (outbound):**  
Cass → Joliet → Jackson/Bridge → Broadway → Western →  
(regular route)

## 4. Expand Utility of Dynamic Signage at Stations and on Transit Vehicles

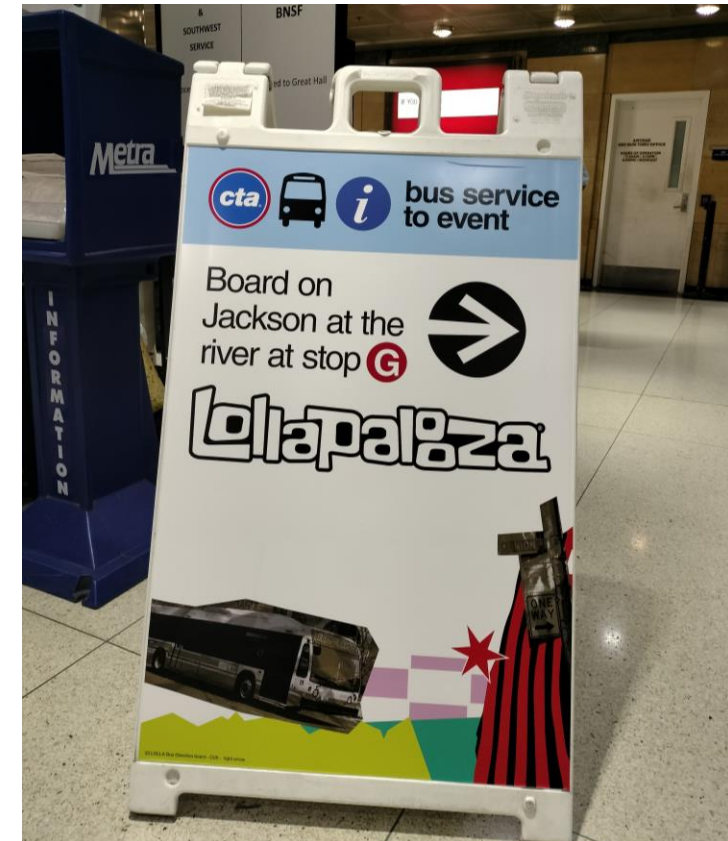
- 4.1 Dynamic Signs on Vehicles to Facilitate Transfers
- 4.2 Shared Displays at Interagency Locations



Examples of dynamic signage at stations and on vehicles that could be utilized to show real-time information about connecting services. Source: HNTB, CTA

## 5. Refine Communication Strategies Around Special Events

- 5.1 Show Real-Time Transit Services for Special Events on GTFS Feeds
- 5.2 Geographically Based Service Alerts on Vehicles Before & During Special Events
- 5.3 Implement GTFS Trip Modifications Functionality
- 5.4 Use Existing A/V Equipment at Stations to Communicate Special Events
- 5.5 Communication of Bus Bunching



## 6. Improve Signage for Clarity and Accessibility

- 6.1 Incorporate Bus Stop Identification Letters in Customer Information Displays
- 6.2 Upgrade Comprehensive Wayfinding with Replacement of Metra Platform Signs



(Left): Bus Stop Identification sign Joliet Bus Station. Photos on the right show the new (top) and the old (bottom) styles of Metra platform signage. Sources: RTA, HNTB

## 7. Improve Dynamic A/V Announcements at Stations and on Transit Vehicles

- 7.1 Audio and Visual Announcements for Incoming CTA Trains at Multi-Line Stations
- 7.2 Standardize Alert Tones
- 7.3 Add Platform/Track Information to Arrival Announcements at Metra Stations
- 7.4 Adjust Track Number Announcements at Metra Terminus Stations
- 7.5 Improve Announcements for Transfers



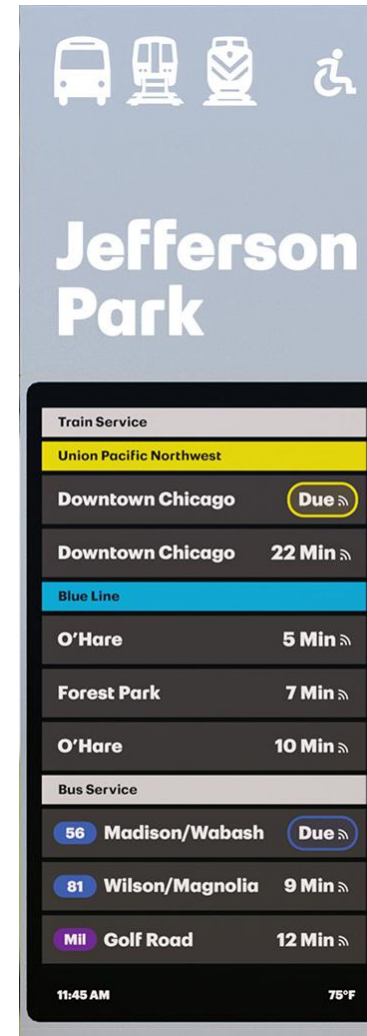
## 8. Standardize and Improve Support for Multiple Languages

- 8.1 Provide Consistent Language Support Across All Agencies
- 8.2 Professional Translations of Standard Service Alert Messages
- 8.3 Website to Introduce Customers to Audio and Visual Prompts Used Across the Transit System
- 8.4 Incorporate Language Support on Signage



# Action Plan Components

- Action Items for RTA and the Service Boards (Listed on the previous slides)
- Timeline for actions
  - Within 1 Year
  - 1-3 Years
  - 3+ Years
- Relative Cost



# Questions

Kevin Stanciel

Beatrix Yan