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Date: October 27, 2025  
Time: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
RTA Board Room  
175 W. Jackson Blvd,  
Suite 1650  
Chicago, IL 60604

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## RTA Citizens Advisory Board Meeting Minutes 10-27-2025

### 1) Call to Order

- a. Ryan Ruehle, RTACAB Chair, called to order the RTA Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Meeting on 10/27/2025 at 10:00 a.m.

### 2) Membership Updates

- a. Michael VanDekreke, Director of Mobility Services, announced that today is DuPage County Rider Rep, Karl Gieseke's last meeting. They will look for another rider in DuPage County to serve on the RTACAB. Additionally, Kristin Paus joined the RTACAB as the Lake County Rider Representative. They work for Lake County Center for Independent Living.

### 3) Roll Call

- a. Voting CAB Members Present In-Person:
  - i. Ryan Ruehle, Chair, Suburban Cook County
  - ii. Scott Henning, Vice Chair, McHenry County
  - iii. Colin Phillips, Will County
  - iv. Rob Hart, Metra CAB Chair
  - v. Heidi Files, Kane County
  - vi. Loren Gutierrez, The Network
  - vii. Joe Surdam, Lake County
  - viii. Adam Kerman, Pace CAB
- b. Non-voting CAB Members Present In-Person:
  - i. Douglas Fowler, Will County Rider
- c. Other Individuals Present In-Person:
  - i. Kendra Johnson, RTA
  - ii. Michael VanDekreke, RTA



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- iii. Peter Kersten, RTA
- iv. Sarah Fettig, RTA
- v. Rob Nash, RTA
- vi. Doug Anderson, RTA
- vii. Leanne Redden, RTA
- d. Voting CAB Members Present Virtually:
  - i. John Loper, DuPage County
- e. Non-Voting CAB Members Present Virtually:
  - i. Kristin Paus, Lake County Rider
  - ii. Terry Kappel, McHenry County Rider
  - iii. Xavier Potts, City of Chicago Rider
  - iv. Parker Thompson, Kane County Rider
  - v. Ayesha Akhtar, Suburban Cook County Rider
  - vi. Karl Gieseke, DuPage County Rider
- f. Other Individuals Present Virtually:
  - i. Drew Duffin, McHenry County
  - ii. Tyler James, CTA
  - iii. Kat Woodruff, CTA
  - iv. Kyle Whitehead, RTA
  - v. Felisha Barbee, RTA
  - vi. Tina F. Smith, RTA
  - vii. Steve Andrew, Pace
  - viii. Garland Armstrong
  - ix. Heather Armstrong

#### **4) Approval of the July 28, 2025, Minutes**

- a. Heidi Files motioned to approve the July 28, 2025, minutes and Scott Hennings seconded it. The July 28, 2025, meeting minutes were approved.

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## 5) Public Comments

- a. Garland Armstrong mentioned concerns around the Taxi Access Program (TAP), Rideshare Access Program (RAP), and reduction in services. He wants to make sure people can get to where they need to go and that RTA is prepared.
- b. Heather Armstrong is concerned about CTA and the bus service to get to Pace.

## 6) Update on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault RTA Public Transportation Assistance Program

- a. Loren Gutierrez, Managing Attorney, Safety & Family Practice Group, Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services representing The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence stated that most of the program's permits have been distributed to survivors. She reported that there continues to be a large need for permits for customers, as many are asking for assistance with the cost of transportation. The Network is working with lawmakers on legislation to continue the program.

## 7) Service Board CAB Reports

- a. Rob Hart, Metra CAB Chair
  - i. Rob Hart stated that Metra was unable to schedule their third quarter meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for November 6, 2025.
- b. Adam Kerman, Pace CAB Chair
  - i. Adam Kerman shared that Pace reported that there will be no cuts in 2026, but they will exhaust their rainy-day funds in 2026. Pace develops two budgets, a suburban budget and an ADA paratransit budget. The suburban budget is funded through 2026. ADA Paratransit budget is not funded through the year but receiving funds for 3 months from the RTA. There is discussion between Pace and RTA that Pace would lend funds to RTA and RTA would pay it back if they received additional funding from SB2111. The "loan" would fully fund ADA Paratransit through the end of 2026. He recommends the RTA take this approach. Additionally, he does not agree with RTA's approach to limit the Rideshare Access Program (RAP) and Taxi Access Program (TAP) to 30 rides per month. He believes RAP is going to be the

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future of service in the suburbs. He is asking the RTA to reconsider this issue.

- c. Katanya Raby, CTA CAB Chair, was not present. Tyler James, CTA Representative, shared an update on their behalf. Tyler stated the CTA CAB received a presentation about safety and a brainstorming session for a future ambassador program.

i. Questions/comments:

- Doug Fowler asked to make a comment related to concerns around the fiscal cliff. The reduction in public transit is an area of concern. Car ownership is a concern due to high car payments, repairs, and insurance. Many individuals have resorted to rideshare, electric scooters or bikes. It makes sense for first and last mile options but not for all, especially if Metra slashes their service. He fears for regional isolationism and what that means to Will County – population, workforce, etc.
- Adam Kerman shared that Metra is displaying their Café Car at Union Station.
- John Loper stated they are committed to another year of the Hinsdale Lake Terrace Neighborhood Rideshare Access Program. The program is expensive and looking at ways to continue the program through the Pace Revision plan and NITA legislation. More information about the program can be found here:  
[https://www.dupagecounty.gov/government/departments/transportation/getting\\_around/mobility\\_projects/hltrideshare.php](https://www.dupagecounty.gov/government/departments/transportation/getting_around/mobility_projects/hltrideshare.php).

- (a) Adam Kerman asked if this program is for the general public. John stated it is, but it is geographically limited.

## 8) Fiscal Cliff and 2026 Budget Update

- i. Doug Anderson, Manager, Budget and Business Analysis, shared information about the fiscal cliff hub website and the 2026 budget process.
- ii. Here is a recap of our six-month budget calendar:
- June 12: RTA Board Adoption of Budget Call

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- Early July: Release of Preparatory Funding Amounts
  - July 11: Service Board Submittals of Capital Funding Estimates
  - Aug 21: RTA Board Considers Adoption of 2026-2030 Funding Amounts
  - Oct 3: Deadline for Capital Budgets to RTA
  - Oct 10: Deadline for Service Board Budget Submittals to RTA
  - Oct/Nov: Service Board Budget and Capital Program Public Hearings
  - Nov 20: Service Boards Present Budgets at RTA Board Meeting
  - Early Dec: RTA Regional Budget and Capital Program Public Hearing
  - Dec 18: Budget and Capital Program Considered for Adoption
- iii. The Service Boards laid out multiple budget scenarios depending on the outcome of the SB2111. The RTA received the budget request on October 10, 2025. The Regional Budget will be discussed and potentially approved in December 2025. The RTA's budget taskforce and the ad hoc committees work together to delay the worst impacts of the fiscal cliff. The committees have met seven times.
- iv. RTA Board actions taken to date:
- The funding actions taken in 2025 and 2026:
    - (a) \$42M of additional RTA funding provided to Pace to address projected 2025 ADA budget shortfall, including reallocation of 2025 ICE funding from CTA, Metra, and Pace
    - (b) \$74M of 2026 operating funding shifted to CTA from Metra, Pace, and RTA
  - Lower 2025 spending and efficiencies at all agencies

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- Improved sales tax receipts due to January 1 change regarding online transactions. Yields an estimated \$203M of additional 2025 sales tax and PTF. Future impact is estimated at \$200M which is included in adopted 2026-2028 funding amounts.
- v. The RTA asked the service boards to develop two budget scenarios. Scenario 1 is if we receive no new state funding and the Service Boards need to pull down their expenses in late 2026. RAP and TAP are funded through Q1. Scenario 2 is receiving new funding which averts the cliff. The RTA recommends a 10% fare increase and is present in both scenarios.
- vi. **Fiscal Cliff Update**
  - The 2026 the fiscal cliff figure was reduced. A year ago, RTA, CTA, Metra, and Pace estimated that the 2026 Plan Year will require \$771M in funding to close the gap. Cost controls, lower spending, and efficiencies identified through good stewardship of limited public resources have brought expenses down by \$38M and \$17M in transfers to capital and ICE funding nets a \$541M positive change in the 2026 shortfall. With the current information available, that puts the preliminary unfunded shortfall at \$230 million for 2026 after the service board reserves are used.
  - Sale tax impact - The January and February results suggest approximately a \$10 million monthly increase, while the March and April results indicated a monthly impact closer to a \$20 million increase. In May there is was approximately a \$12 million increase. June and July receipts were strong again. These data points have been used to estimate the additional online sales tax funding in 2026.
    - (a) Adam Kerman asked about the sales tax in May and if there was a lag in receiving it. Doug Anderson stated no, and it was already accounted for.
  - Outlook for the next three-year budget fiscal cliff:
    - (a) 2026: \$230M
    - (b) 2027: \$834M

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- (c) 2028: \$937M
- Fiscal cliff – preliminary estimates by agency
  - (a) CTA is projected to exhaust their remaining reserves in mid-2026. Producing a preliminary \$112M shortfall in 2026, growing to \$482M in the full budget year 2027 and \$528M in 2028.
  - (b) Metra projects to exhaust their remaining reserves closer to the end of 2026. Producing a \$68M shortfall in 2026 that will grow to \$276M in 2027 and \$305M in 2028. Metra has included a \$60M transfer to capital each year.
  - (c) Pace suburban service has no shortfall for 2026, remaining reserves will not be exhausted until 2027, producing shortfalls of \$22M and \$47M in 2027 and 2028 respectively.
  - (d) The traditional ADA budget will not have a shortfall, as the ADA is funded first. But the subsidy programs, TAP and RAP will see shortfalls beginning in 2026 at \$49M and growing to \$57M and \$58M in the planned years.
    - (i) Ryan Ruehle asked what is driving the sales tax revenue. Doug Anderson stated sales tax allocated to RTA was extending to include online transactions.
    - (ii) Ryan Ruehle asked about additional funding outside of reserves.
    - (iii) Ayesha Akhtar asked about the sales tax rate and if there is a sunset on the tax. Doug Anderson shared that it is 1.5% in Cook County and .5% in the collar counties. There is no sunset.
    - (iv) Rob Hart had concerns that the sales tax revenue will slow down. Doug Anderson stated there is no sign at this time that it will slow down. Rob Hart stated that Metra is not planning service cuts in 2026. Doug Anderson stated that RTA is showing a shortfall and Metra states that they can continue to provide service without funding. Rob Hart shared information about the \$68M shortfall as a contingent fund. He reported that it does not represent committed funds but can be

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used for the debt service program for bridges. He stated that Metra reports that they cannot keep up with the bridge deterioration and has been exploring independent financing to fix bridges. This is an operating line reserve and gives Metra the ability to run their own business as they see fit. Metra approved their budget in October and has been a good steward. RTA has taken away money from Metra. He urges RTA to listen to the Metra Board and staff.

1. Leanne Redden, RTA Executive Director, agreed with the comments about the need of investment in bridges. Metra's Chair reached out to RTA about the \$60M they were earmarking for bridge repair. Metra will pull that back budget for 2026 and look at it for the future years.
  2. Rob Hart stated that he stands by what he says and thinks it is a good news that Metra's Director compromised on this. From a policy standpoint, it is a mistake.
  3. Adam Kerman thought they would lose bonding authority in the proposed legislation. Rob Hart shared that is not the current law.
- Peter Kersten, Manager, Strategy and Policy, shared a timeline for service cuts and fare increases if there is no additional funding provided from Springfield.
  - In November of 2025, federally required Title VI hearings will be triggered by fare increases, additionally, the CTA, Metra, and Pace boards will vote on budgets, and the RTA board will adopt the scenario 1 budget. In February 2026, the 10% regional fare increase goes into effect.
  - Q1 of 2026, CTA could institute a hiring freeze for non-service positions.
  - Q2 of 2026, CTA would begin the Title VI report and public notice processes for service cuts, including sending warning or layoff notices to operators. All four agencies will begin coordination work on regional impacts.

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- April would see cuts to RAP and TAP – the subsidized service that allows ADA certified users to use rideshare for a limited number of trips. Q3 of 2026, CTA layoffs would begin including union and non-union roles. The first round of service cuts begin at the CTA, which will have an impact on the ADA service area.
- Q4 of 2026, CTA would likely have a second round of operator layoffs notices go out with anticipation of additional cuts coming in 2027. Metra would send its first round of layoff warning notices to staff. Again, all four agencies would coordinate on regional impacts.
- With no action on funding reform, 2027 will be worse. Starting in December of 2026 the RTA Board would need to adopt a balanced regional transit budget reflecting close to an \$800 million fiscal cliff. Additionally, no recovery ratio relief will lead to the need to return hundreds of millions of dollars to the state, further lowering transit funding. Q1 2027 would include a second, deeper round of cuts to CTA service. Metra would make its first round of service cuts and again, the ADA service area would be impacted reflected by a reduction in the fixed route service area. Q2, Pace would send warning notices to operators. All four agencies would continue to coordinate on impacts. Q3 the first round of Pace suburban service cuts would go into effect with further impacts on the ADA service area. This is not a one-time event. Cuts to service will decrease ridership, bringing in less operations revenue, leading to further cuts in service. This is a well-studied phenomenon sometimes referred to as a transit death spiral.
- With this long-term outlook in mind, Mr. Kersten reminded the committee that cuts to state funding for Reduced Fare and ADA paratransit service of over \$400 million over the last decade has already led to spending reductions, efficiencies, and fare changes at the service boards.
- RTA Quarterly Panel Survey:
  - (a) Findings of the survey were posted to the rider dashboard on the RTA website and a more in-depth report was provided at the October 2025 Board meeting.

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- (b) The RTA summer’s quarterly panel survey was just completed. The survey asked riders how they would be most impacted by service cuts, and how they think the region as a whole would be impacted. Results showed that riders are worried about longer wait and travel times for buses, limited access to jobs and other opportunities, paying more each time they use transit, and challenges for their family and friends that rely on the transit network. Lastly, riders are worried they may have to pay for an Uber or taxi, buy a bike to get around, or just stay home without affordable options for travel.
- (c) When asked what would make riders use transit more, the top 3 responses were getting to the destination on time, increased service available, and faster service. Personal security, cleanliness, and real time information are all also important to riders, but service is key.
- 2026 Regional Transit Operating Budget and Capital Program – County Hearings and RTA Public Meeting Dates:
  - (a) Cook: Monday, November 10, 9:30 a.m.
  - (b) DuPage: Wednesday, November 12, 7:00 p.m.
  - (c) McHenry: Tuesday, November 13, 9:00 a.m.
  - (d) Lake: Tuesday, November 18, 9:00 a.m.
  - (e) Will: Tuesday, December 9, 9:00 a.m.
  - (f) Kane: Tuesday, December 9, 9:45 a.m.
  - (g) RTA Public Meeting: Thursday, December 4, 4:00-6:00 p.m.
    - (i) Rob Hart states if the farebox recovery is not amended then that will completely impact the budget. Doug Anderson stated that the RTA continues to communicate this issue to lawmakers. The recovery ratio waiver will continue through 2025. In 2026, if it does not change, the region would not meet the 50% recovery ratio, and the state would withhold PTF.
    - (ii) Terry Kappel asked how the survey was conducted. Peter Kersten stated there is a pool of about 11,000

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people. It is conducted quarterly and available in English. The RTA is recruiting additional survey participants using Ventra data to identify individuals who may want to participate.

- (iii) Garland Armstrong asked if the RTA public budget hearing will be held virtually. Michael VanDekreke reported that it was a virtual meeting.
- (iv) Loreen Gutierrez had concerns about the survey only being available in English.
- (v) Adam Kerman asked about legislation and the projections around the surcharge of delivery services. Rob Nash shared that there was discussion, and the Senate Democratic staff utilized comparisons to states that have already implemented it.

## 9) Legislative Update

- a. Rob Nash, Director of Government Affairs, shared that RTA staff joined the House Executive Committee Subject Matter Hearing on October 15, 2025. He provided context about the timeframe and that the Service Boards will exhaust their dollars. In 2027, the region will head into a resource-restrained environment. It may seem the lawmakers have more time to act, but there is still an urgency due to the lag time of receiving funds. RTA's Transforming Transit reform proposal was shared with legislative leaders and stakeholders. There are concerns about NITA or other proposals that would face the same hurdles that the RTA is currently facing, specifically around authority. The General Assembly has asked CMAP to verify and re-verify work through the PART report and the near-term cliff in 2026, 2027, and 2028.
- b. There are no legislative proposals at this time to address funding and governance reform.
- c. The recovery ratio is on the list as a component of a comprehensive proposal and hoping that there will be a solution put forth by lawmakers.
  - i. Rob Hart thanked Rob Nash for his service and the work he is doing. Rob Hart mentioned additional expenses, such as a police force, and wondering if those are still being considered. Rob Nash stated he believes so and wants to make sure

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lawmakers account for new requirements in their proposed funding amounts.

### **10) RTACAB Membership Terms and 2026 Meeting Dates**

- a. Michael VanDekreke provided an overview of the bylaws related to membership terms for rider representatives. Most rider members' initial terms will end in 2025, but are subject to renewal. Article II sections 2 and 3 on page 2 of the bylaws outline the terms of service for both voting members and non-voting rider members.
  - i. For a quick summary:
    - For Voting members:
      - (a) The Chair, Vice Chair, the suburban Cook County representative and the City of Chicago representative may serve two consecutive two-year terms.
      - (b) The chairs of the Service Board CABs, the representative from the Network, and the 5 collar county DOT members all serve terms equal to the duration of their role at their appointing body.
    - For non-voting rider members:
      - (a) All, except the commissioner of MOPD, can serve for 2 consecutive two-year terms.
- b. As of the end of today's meeting, members have completed the first of the two-2-year terms. All members who are eligible for 2-consecutive 2-year terms need to contact Michael VanDekreke or Kendra Johnson to let them know if they would like to stay on for their second 2-year term.
- c. The proposed 2026 meeting dates are:
  - i. Monday, January 26 @ 10:00 a.m.
  - ii. Monday, April 27 @ 10:00 a.m.
  - iii. Monday, July 27 @ 10:00 a.m.
  - iv. Monday, October 26 @ 10:00 a.m.
- d. Heidi Files motioned to approve the 2026 RTACAB meeting dates and Doug Fowler seconded it. The 2026 RTACAB meeting dates were approved.

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## 11) Other Business

### a. HSTP Update:

- i. Michael VanDekreke stated the RTA is the designated recipient of the federally funded Section 5310 funds known as the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program. The intent of the 5310 program is to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options.
- ii. All designated recipients of 5310 funds are required to have a Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) that identifies strategies to meet the mobility needs of these target populations.
- iii. The RTA is starting the process of updating the HSTP, which was last updated and Board adopted in 2021. The update to the plan will be completed in summer 2026. Stakeholder and general public input will play a central role throughout the process to ensure the resulting plan is actionable, equitable, and responsive to regional needs. The public can share their input through a survey. This can be shared throughout the committee's networks.
  - Survey: [surveymonkeys.com/r/MobilityRTA](https://surveymonkeys.com/r/MobilityRTA)

## 12) Adjourn

- a. Heidi Files made a motion to adjourn; Scott Henning seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM.
- b. Next meeting is Monday, January 26, 2026, at 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.