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Date: April 27, 2026  
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 4-27-2026

### 1) Call to Order

- a. Ryan Ruehle, RTACAB Chair, called to order the RTA Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Meeting on 4/27/2026 at 10:01 a.m.

### 2) Roll Call

- a. Voting CAB Members Present In-Person:
  - i. Ryan Ruehle, Chair, Suburban Cook County
  - ii. Scott Hennings, McHenry County
  - iii. Ana Valenzuela-Ruiz, McHenry County
  - iv. John Loper, DuPage County
  - v. Joe Surdam, Lake County
  - vi. Heidi Files, Kane County
  - vii. Colin Phillips, Will County
  - viii. Rob Hart, Metra CAB Chair
  - ix. Adam Kerman, Pace CAB Chair
  - x. Loren Gutierrez, The Network
- b. Non-voting CAB Members Present In-Person:
  - i. Terry Kappel, McHenry County Rider
  - ii. Doug Fowler, Will County Rider
- c. Other Individuals Present In-Person:
  - i. Kendra Johnson, RTA
  - ii. Michael VanDekreke, RTA
  - iii. Tyler James, CTA
  - iv. Brygette Lopez, Kane County
- d. Non-Voting CAB Members Present Virtually:
  - i. Rachel Arfa, MOPD



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- ii. Kristin Paus, Lake County Rider
- iii. Xavier Potts, City of Chicago Rider
- iv. Parker Thompson, Kane County Rider
- v. Ayesha Akhtar, Suburban Cook County Rider
- e. Other Individuals Present Virtually:
  - i. Jill Leary, RTA
  - ii. Melissa Meyer, RTA
  - iii. Doug Anderson, RTA
  - iv. Sarah Fettig, RTA
  - v. Steve Andrews, Pace
  - vi. Garland Armstrong

**3) Approval of the October 27, 2025 and January 26, 2026 minutes**

- a. Heidi Files made a motion for approval; Rob Hart seconded the motion. The October 27, 2025 meeting minutes and January 26, 2026 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

**4) Public Comments**

- a. Garland Armstrong gave kudos to CTA regarding accessibility. He had concerns about Metra stations - some do not have flashing signals and bridge construction. He would like to know the progress and completion dates of these.

**5) 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 provided an update on the implementation of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault RTA Public Transportation Assistance Program. She shared they are looking forward to starting up the new fare program for survivors of domestic violence.
  - i. Terry Kappel asked when the fare cards that were distributed already in the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault RTA

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Public Transportation Assistance Program will expire. Loren Gutierrez shared the expiration dates are in the 2030s.

#### **6) Service Board CAB Reports**

- a. Rob Hart, Metra CAB Chair, shared an update on the budget. The sales tax revenue is higher – Metra received \$77M. Metra will get through 2026 without depleting all of the COVID funds.
  - i. Terry Kappel asked about the proposed new DeKalb line. Rob Hart shared that it is outside of the Metra region and would need legislation to extend it.
  - ii. John Loper is interested in the Roselle station. He shared that they are aware of pedestrian crossing issues and have a coalition studying this area. They are interested in more participants.
- b. No Pace CAB update.
- c. No CTA CAB update.

#### **7) RTACAB Recommendations for the Northern Illinois Transit Authority**

- a. Michael VanDekreke stated that staff compiled recommendations from RTACAB members to be shared with the RTA Board. He stated that the recommendations were included in the RTACAB meeting packet and need to be approved by the RTACAB members.
  - i. Terry Kappel shared the need for additional bus and dial-a-ride service in McHenry County. Staff reported that this would be included in the recommendations and the RTACAB could approve them as amended.
- b. John Loper motioned for approval of the recommendations; Doug Fowler seconded. Motion passed unanimously; recommendations were approved.

#### **8) Northern Illinois Transit Authority Transition Update**

- a. Peter Kersten, RTA, shared that the Proposed 2026 Operating Budget Amendment was present at the April RTA Board meeting. There are two goals of this proposal:
  - i. Fund key priorities identified in the NITA Act for early implementation. This will allow staff to begin planning and

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implementation of key milestones that are identified in the act, some of which have approaching deadlines.

- ii. Secondly, to provide flexibility by only allocating a portion of the total estimated available 2026 funds, leaving policy and budgetary decisions to the new NITA Board. When the NITA Board is fully seated later this year there will be decision points for determining longer-term priorities, likely a second 2026 amendment and then the 2027 Budget process.
  - iii. The purpose of the presentation is to brief the RTACAB on the proposed 2026 budget amendment which has taken shape, to be considered for adoption at the May Board meeting. 45% of the new 2026 revenue anticipated from P.A. 104-0457 was already allocated by the RTA Board upon adoption of the 2026 operating budget in December. This left almost \$320 million for future allocation, part of which we are proposing to utilize in the proposed amendment to make near-term investments producing meaningful impacts for our riders and employees. The 2026 adopted budget already includes enhanced transit service from each of the Service Boards. Service additions are planned in every collar county, suburban Cook, and the city of Chicago.
  - iv. For CTA, the focus is continuing to expand the 20-route frequent bus network as well as targeted route extensions and hours of service increases.
  - v. For Metra, additional weekday runs on the BNSF, Milwaukee West, Metra Electric, North Central Service, and Rock Island are already planned. As well as additional weekend runs on the UP North, Rock Island, and UP Northwest.
  - vi. Pace is aiming to achieve 15-minute headways on 12 routes, serving areas across the six counties.
- b. Peter Kersten reminded the committee that throughout the past year they have utilized the Quarterly Customer Panel survey to better understand what riders are experiencing and what they want changed and improved.
  - c. For the Q4 survey, they asked riders to divide 100 points between five objectives, representing how important each is to them. With 100 points total, how many do you give to each category?

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- i. The top priority was public safety - service improvement and expansion (combined accounted for 40%), capital systems (16%), and seamless and affordable fares (14%).
- d. The projects and initiatives proposed reflect these priorities. The benefits of the proposal are clear. This is about riders, operators and front-line staff, and the communities we serve. Each dollar in the proposal is tied to making the system work better, making it safer for riders and operators, and empowering communities to better support transit service. This is primarily an investment in staffing levels at the Service Boards and partner law enforcement agencies. This proposal will make the system safer for riders and operators. It advances service enhancements, makes fares seamless and expands affordability, improves customer experience through cleanliness upgrades and real-time information. Lastly, all administrative expenses included in the proposal are to set up NITA for success and meet specific deadlines in the Act.
- e. Keeping the transition to NITA at top of mind, they have taken a new, methodical approach to this proposed amendment. This included fully involving the Service Board staffs and even State Representatives in a deliberate, collaborative process to allocate the additional discretionary funding to best uses. This stands in contrast to the previous process for budget amendments which relied on AD Hoc requests and formulaic funding. The specific recommendations come from 5 separate groups, covering specific topic areas including: public safety & security, transit service, rider information, fares policies and integration, and transit supportive land use planning.
- f. The goal of each group was to identify immediate actions and resources needed to make improvements that riders want to see, while addressing NITA Act deadlines and setting up the new agency for early success. This proposal is the first big milestone in transition activities. In total, \$132.2M is proposed. *(For specific funding breakdowns, see slides 18 through 27: [RTACAB 042726 PP.](#))*
- g. Public Safety and Security: The investments in public safety and security will increase human presence on transit, both law enforcement and non-police. The current proposals primarily focus on funding initiatives identified in the CTA's FTA Safety plan and other resources for Metra and Pace. Coming both in additional

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sworn officers from CPD, Metra Police, and Cook County Sheriffs and added security staff for K-9 patrols and Safe Ride specialists who provide crisis intervention. Additionally, bus shields and body worn cameras are included to ensure the safety of operators and conductors. There are technology upgrades for safety software and in incident reporting app. And lastly, funding for the NITA Task Force and Transit Security Office. The current funding request is limited to the immediate needs for 2026. A holistic transit safety and security strategy will be developed through the NITA Act starting this summer and future year budgets will determine long-term initiatives on public safety on the transit system.

- i. Roughly 80% of the total for Public Safety is staffing increases, to put more sworn officers, security contractors, and safe ride specialists on transit.
- h. Service expansion & enhancement: Service expansion and enhancement includes staffing, and headcount increases to add more service to the network as well as improvements to service reliability. In the service category, they are also including facilities and cleanliness upgrades, driven by rider feedback. Refresh and renew for additional stations, and additional staffing to increase the level of mid-line and coach cleaning already budgeted in 2026.
  - i. Address two issues that impact reliability: slow zones and HVAC.
- i. Rider information: For rider information, the project list will fast-track improvements to the customer experience with improved inter-agency real-time information at stations and stops and language and accessibility improvements. These are improvements that were identified in the Travel Information planning study they completed last year with the Service Boards. They will roll out initial upgrades at key inter-agency locations where two or more of the service boards operate throughout the region, ensuring at least one in each collar county, suburban Cook, and the city of Chicago. They are also expanding and enhancing digital and real-time information to include things like paths of travel to/from transit and within transit facilities and real-time elevator status.
- j. Fares: For fares, the proposal includes Expansion of the Access Pilot to include CTA and Pace. The Access Pilot on Metra is an income-based reduced fare. They have the infrastructure in place to

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roll-out expansion to CTA and Pace, fulfilling a NITA requirement while broadly expanding affordability for residents from lower-income households. Additionally, RTA and CTA Transit Benefit programs will merge, and they will enact a series of harmonizing fare policy updates that will set up NITA for further centralizing fares at the regional agency. This includes standardizing student fares, U-Pass, active and veteran military, and other programs. The \$10M in proposed funding covers the full cost of expanding Access (which is mostly lost fare revenue) as well as limited technology and development costs tied to policy changes.

- k. Land use: Proposed expenses will increase funding to the existing Community Planning grant program to fast-track People Over Parking Act implementation. This will help more communities begin planning and development work to do things like TOD studies, zoning updates, and developer panels. Similarly, the proposal includes additional funding for Access to Transit grants to improve transit supportive infrastructure around stations and stops, advancing accessibility improvements throughout the region - sidewalks, curb cuts, crossings, signals, etc. Lastly, an ETOD study of the new Green Line station to be built, which is a requirement of the NITA Act.
  - i. Adam Kerman asked about Racine and the Green Line Study.
- l. Next steps: They are accepting public comment on the proposal through the RTA website April 20 – May 8. You can go to [rtachicago.org](http://rtachicago.org) to register for the coalition meeting on 4/29/2026 or to make a public comment. After incorporating feedback, they will finalize the proposal with the Service Boards and then intend to bring the budget amendment to the May RTA Board meeting for a vote.
  - i. With a vote of approval from the RTA Board, the Service Boards will then seek approval to incorporate into their budgets. Implementation could begin immediately in the second half of the year and then financial reporting of amended budget would begin in July.
  - ii. Questions:
    - Ryan Ruehle asked about the CPD program and the sworn officers. Peter Kersten said there is funding up to 99 officers,

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increasing it to 180 officers on transit. This is overtime offered to officers; they are not hiring new officers.

- John Loper asked about the Safety and Security budget. Peter Kersten said they will help set up NITA, but it is a question for the new board. John Loper asked about including the collar counties in the taskforce.
- Adam Kerman asked if Cook County police will have access to the 6 counties on transit. Adam Kerman asked about security and night service on the BNSF. Peter shared that Metra police does not ride the BNSF and it is contracted out.
- Rob Hart provided an overview of the IDOT proposal/RFP and indicated that bid opening was this afternoon. The RFP asks a vendor to do 13 different tasks with 51 deliverables. The contract will be selected by the end of July. He feels this is very aggressive.
- Ryan Ruehle asked if the Service Board CABs will be sunseting. Adam Kerman and Rob Hart indicated that Pace and Metra's CABs are.

## 9) County-Based Dial-a-Ride Presentations

- a. MCRide – Scott Hennings/Ana Valenzuela-Ruiz presented.
  - i. Scott Hennings addressed Terry Kappel's concerns about the lack of fixed route services in McHenry County and agrees. McHenry County has limited-service buses and 1 fixed route bus. The county started to get involved in transportation in 2012 to advocate for additional services and expand transit as they can.
    - McHenry County Pace Bus RT: 806, 807, 808: 11,000 trips per year
  - ii. MCRide Dial-a-Ride:
    - Established in 2012
    - McHenry County-wide
    - Available to anyone
    - 90,000 trips per year

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- Operated 7 days a week, from 5 AM to 11 PM, not on holidays
  - Services provided by wheelchair accessible buses, taxis, and TNCs
- iii. Connect Rideshare
- Established in 2024
  - RTA region-wide
  - Available to county residents who are seniors and people with disabilities
  - 33,000 trips per year and growing
  - Operated 24/7/365
  - Uber/UZURV have few, if any, wheelchair accessible vehicles
- (a) Kristin Paus and Ayesha Akhtar would like more information about Connect Rideshare. Staff will connect them to Scott Hennings for more information.
- iv. The dial-a-ride fare is based on distance. Public cost per trip: \$42 (McHenry and Pace split this cost). McHenry County pays \$1.9M before Section 5310 reimbursement.
- v. The Connect Rideshare costs \$5 for riders and receive a \$15 voucher for rideshare trips that either begin or end in the county.
- vi. McHenry County is talking with Pace to provide more services for the county. They are looking to have similar service as other collar counties.
- Heidi Files asked about ADA Paratransit and if they had customers with issues accessing the service in their county because of long driveways in the rural areas.
  - Adam Kerman shared that he thinks McHenry County is going to be hurt by the NITA legislative and funds due to lack of ridership. He believes that the problem with ReVision is it does not consider dial-a-rides. He is concerned about the low density of the county, which will prohibit an increase in fixed route service.

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- (a) Scott Hennings shared there are areas of McHenry County that have similar density to other cities in the collar counties thus should have equitable transit in those areas.
- vii. Future Challenges ahead:
- McHenry County is facing large structural budget deficits over the next several years with RTA Sales Tax funds increasingly used to plug holes for public safety investments.
  - Likely reduction or even elimination of McHenry County funding to subsidize public transit services - MCRide and Connect.
  - McHenry County looks forward to the implementation of Pace's ReVision Plan, with more frequent service on existing 80 routes and the addition of several new routes serving locations where people live and want to travel.
  - It is the county's hope that the future of transit in McHenry County will look a lot like it does throughout the other collar counties.
    - (a) Substantial fixed route transit system(s) serving the dense areas of the County (Crystal Lake, Woodstock, McHenry)
    - (b) Pared down version of MCRide and/or Connect playing a supportive role by filling in gaps in less dense areas of the County.
- b. Hinsdale Lake Terrace Rideshare – John Loper
- i. This area has a high pre-teen and teen population and 50% of the population are at or below poverty level. DuPage County developed a pilot and tagged on to the Pace RAP program. They conducted outreach at the schools and put flyers in students' backpacks to bring home to parents which resulted in 10% of the population enrolling in the pilot.
  - ii. In November, the program expanded geofencing based on feedback that residents wanted access to medical campus and family in Cook County. This increased ridership to 4500+ trips per month, making the program unsustainable for the county.

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c. Ride in Kane – Heidi Files

- i. Introduced the Mobility Manager, Brygette Lopez.
- ii. Program started in 2008. Up until 5 months ago, they had 18 sponsors representing different service areas, which was confusing for riders and caused a high administrative burden.
- iii. In 2025, increased funding incentivized change in the Ride in Kane structure to coordinate services county-wide, eliminating the disjointed 18-sponsor service model. Effective 1/1/2026 – they have one program for the entire county.
- iv. Kane County uses RTA fare cards for eligibility and Pace’s call center for scheduling.
- v. Current Funding Structure:
  - Pace Subsidy – local sponsor: 50%
  - 5310 funds: 50%
  - Kane County provides funding support as needed
- vi. The program offered 14,000 trips in Q1 2026. They received strong municipal support and have worked through registration challenges with county partners. Ride in Kane hopes 5310 funds continue to be available to help fund the program. They are very interested in the regional dial-a-ride coordination study.

d. Access Will County – Colin Phillips

- i. Partners with Pace, RTA, and AgeGuide
- ii. The program is accessible and designed to meet residents’ mobility needs.
- iii. In 2026, all Pace supported Will County programs were consolidated into a full county-wide dial-a-ride program. The program also includes a small segment of Cook County for riders to have access to Tinley Park and Orland Park, specifically for medical appointments.
- iv. Access Will County hopes to expand coverage to weekend and weeknights, but the program is currently Monday through Friday 5 AM to 6 PM.

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- v. The program rolled out an online application and staff follow up with customers to discuss eligibility. The program now also has an online interactive service area map.
  - vi. In 2026, they are estimated to have 35,000 trips, which is an increase from 15,000 trips in 2025.
    - Tyler James congratulated Colin Phillips and the program's growth.
    - Colin Phillips asked about other dial-a-ride programs and their staff size.
      - (a) Heidi Files shared that 3 people are assigned to the program including a full time mobility manager and Heidi and their CFO assist as needed.
      - (b) Scott Henning reported that the MC Ride staffing size is the same as Kane County.
      - (c) John Loper said that it is managed through their Community Services department of about 3.5 staff.
      - (d) Joe Surdam shared that there are 2 people assigned to the program, but the program really runs itself at this point.

#### **10) Appointment of April Meeting Minutes Approval Committee**

- a. The RTACAB will sunset, coinciding with the effective date of the NITA Act on June 1, 2026. This agenda item is to appoint a 3-person minutes approval committee to review and approve the final set of meeting minutes of the RTACAB. The 3 people who would be appointed are Adam Kerman, Rob Hart, and Ryan Ruelle.
  - i. Heidi Files made the first motion to approve; Scott seconded the motion. The 3-person minutes approval committee was passed unanimously.

#### **11) Other Business**

- a. Ryan Ruelle thanked everyone for their service, especially the RTA Staff.

#### **12) Adjourn:** Scott Henning made a motion to adjourn; John Loper seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM.