



Contact:

Jessica Cabe, Communications Specialist (312-913-3232, Jessica.Cabe@RTAChicago.org)

Media:

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Regional Transportation Authority commits to accessible, rider-focused future with refreshed brand, website

The RTA's new site sets the stage for a strategic plan coming in early December

CHICAGO, Nov. 15, 2022 – Today, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) of Northeastern Illinois launched a new [website](#) featuring a refreshed brand for the agency representative of a forward-looking vision for the region's transit system.

“One of the principles of our forthcoming regional transit strategic plan is ‘Committed to Change,’ and our new website and brand is one way we are showing that commitment,” said RTA Executive Director Leanne Redden. “We have much to accomplish over the next months and years given the impact COVID-19 has had on transit and what we’ve heard our partners and riders say needs to be done to make the region’s public transportation work better for everyone. We begin that process with a website that prioritizes accessibility and usability.”

The RTA's redeveloped website took shape based on analysis of how the old version of the site wasn't serving users well. The analysis found that new visitors accounted for 85 percent of web traffic, demonstrating a need for intuitive navigation. Popular topics for site visitors included the RTA's reduced fare/ride free programs and ADA Paratransit certification, demonstrating that there is a specific need for content as it relates to accessibility and using the transit system. However, the previous website was not ideal for screen readers used by people who are blind or have visual impairments or for mobile users. Another finding was that the old version of the website lacked photography and other opportunities for engagement.

A priority for the redeveloped website is accessibility, both through intuitive design and compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Some of the ways the new website is more accessible and useful for riders include:

- The navigation was reorganized in a way that is intuitive for the average user, breaking up content based on whether it applies to the region as a whole, individual communities, or transit riders.
- The website was developed specifically to work well with screen readers used by people who have visual impairments. As these users tab through a webpage, content will be read in the correct order, and navigating to other pages on the website will be simple and intuitive.



- Brand new photos that focus on transit riders, transit’s relationship to land use, and regional collaboration are now featured throughout the site.
- Application forms, sign-ups, and other opportunities for engagement will be housed within the website rather than taking users to a fillable PDF or external Google Form, making these engagement opportunities easier to find and more customizable on the backend.

The new website is the next step in an ongoing effort to refresh the agency’s online presence. In early 2021, the data and mapping website for the agency, [RTAMS](#), was relaunched with new interactive capabilities, a mapping and GIS portal, several data dashboards, and a digital document library with more than 600 current and historic transit documents. In January 2022, the agency launched a new [online fare portal](#) that allows riders with disabilities and seniors to apply for, renew or replace their ride free or discounted fare cards online rather than in person or by phone. The portal has been used more than 25,000 times since it launched.

The RTA’s updated brand brings the agency’s external look more in line with its values and vision of accessibility and rider focus, also going through extensive accessibility testing to assure it is applied in a way that maximizes legibility and improves the user experience.

The new website and brand set the stage for the agency’s early December release of a new five-year strategic plan that incorporates the input of thousands of stakeholders and riders into a set of [advocacy and action goals](#). The agency has engaged riders, advocates, community leaders and the region’s transit operators in developing the new plan.

“Transit is the strongest tool our region has to achieve its economic, climate and social health goals,” said RTA Board Chairman Kirk Dillard. “Our role is to serve as stewards to ensure that our system is here for future generations. We made a choice to use the challenging past few years as an opportunity to listen and engage with communities and riders. Our response begins with these new communication tools and a new action plan for a changed region.”

The draft strategic plan will be made available Dec. 5, and a public comment period will last through Jan. 9, 2023. The RTA will hold a workshop and virtual public hearing on the draft plan and the 2023 Proposed Operating Budget, Two-Year Financial Plan, and Five-Year Capital Program from 4-6 p.m. on Dec. 7. All are welcome to join the event via [Zoom](#). The RTA Board of Directors will vote on adopting the budget at their Dec. 15 meeting and will vote on the strategic plan at their Feb. 16, 2023, meeting. [Subscribe](#) to the RTA newsletter for updates.

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About the RTA

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is the unit of local government created to oversee finances, to secure funding, and to conduct transit planning for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, and Pace. The RTA manages these three Service Boards’ five-year capital programs. Also, to help riders with disabilities and older adults across Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties, the agency issues Reduced Fare and Ride Free permits, assesses eligibility for ADA Paratransit service, and oversees specialized travel training. For more, visit www.RTAChicago.org.