



**Regional
Transportation
Authority**

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CONTACT: Diane Palmer, Director of Communications, RTA
Office: 312-913-3282 Cell: 312-907-6902

RTA APPROVES FUNDING FOR ADDED WEEKEND SERVICE ON METRA'S SOUTHWEST SERVICE LINE *More service will help serve growing ridership*

Chicago -- The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Board of Directors today approved funding additional weekend service on Metra's SouthWest Service line. Metra applied for the funding through the RTA's Innovation, Coordination, and Enhancement (ICE) program which targets operating and capital projects that implement innovations to improve the quality and delivery of public transportation. The ICE fund was made possible by the operating reform legislation that passed the General Assembly in January.

"This innovative program allows us to explore ways to better serve and respond to emerging travel markets in the suburbs," commented Steve Schlickman, RTA Executive Director. "By using our existing resources more effectively, we can put incremental additional service into operation and give more transit choices to help keep our region on the move. We hope this demonstration project develops strong ridership that could support further investment."

Metra has seen ridership grow at times other than the traditional commute and is working to serve those customers. The project proposes to add three round trips each Saturday on the SouthWest Service line between Manhattan and the Chicago Union Station. Metra proposes to begin the service in March 2009 although an exact schedule for the train operation has yet to be determined.

The added Saturday service would provide improved access to all downtown destinations served through Union Station including museums, parks, shopping, dining, sporting events, cultural events as well as the various downtown campuses of major universities. The expanded service also provides additional travel options to residents living along the line who are employed in Chicago's hospitality, retail or health industries downtown.

"With gas prices still straining budgets, it is extremely important to give people more transportation options, whether they are going to work, going shopping, or taking the family downtown for entertainment," said U.S. Representative Daniel Lipinski (IL-3). He added, "I'm very proud of the great work of the RTA and Metra in helping to bring this added service to the residents of my district and all those along the Southwest Service line."

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Once final funding is approved in the 2009 budget, Metra will receive \$340,000 through the RTA's Innovation, Coordination, and Enhancement (ICE) program and will match that funding amount to begin providing the added service.

"This project took a great amount of cooperation between Congressman Lipinski and the region's freight carriers which travel on and across this commuter line," comment Phil Pagano, Metra Executive Director. He added, "We have come a long way since Metra started when we had only four weekday trains. Today there are 30 weekday trains. Adding three Saturday trains is a step forward for people traveling between Manhattan and Chicago. These trains will offer the much needed alternative to the automobile."

Metra's added SouthWest Service is one of the 43 projects that were approved today in a Program of Projects totaling over \$18 million that cover Community Planning; Sub-regional Planning; Innovation, Coordination and Enhancement (ICE); and the Job Access Reverse Commute/New Freedom programs.

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About the RTA: The RTA provides financial oversight, funding and regional planning for the three public transit operators in northeastern Illinois: The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus and train, Metra commuter rail and Pace suburban bus and paratransit. For more information, visit www.rtachicago.com and www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org.