



**Regional  
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## **For immediate release**

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### **Transit Officials Meet to Assess Status of Funding Crisis** *Time is critical as 2008 budgets need to be settled*

Chicago – The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) met with area transit agencies today to review the current funding status of the system and discuss financial plans for 2008. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra and Pace are all facing significant funding shortfalls for the coming year and have begun preparing plans to close the gap. Officials from all three agencies joined RTA Board Chairman Jim Reilly and RTA Executive Director Steve Schlickman today to once again urge the legislature and Governor to approve a funding plan before the end of the year.

“We appreciate the ongoing effort of the Governor and legislative leaders to develop a comprehensive, long-term transit funding plan,” noted Jim Reilly. “But we have a responsibility to plan for the coming year. If a solid solution is not identified, our Board will be forced to approve a budget based on available resources. And that means severe service cuts, fare increases and layoffs.”

The next meeting of the RTA Board of Directors is scheduled for December 14. The Board will approve 2008 budget for the CTA, Metra and Pace. The transit agencies have crafted financial plans that do not assume any new funds.

“We can only responsibly spend what we know we have,” said Steve Schlickman. “Because we don’t know if new funding will be provided, we have to prepare for a smaller, less extensive system with higher fares and fewer employees. Unfortunately, that means people will have fewer transportation options, traffic congestion will increase and pollution will get worse,” Schlickman explained.

In April of this year, the Illinois Auditor General completed a performance and management review of the RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace. His findings confirmed a financial crisis both in terms of operating funding and capital needs. While he acknowledged fare increases could play a part in addressing the funding shortfall, the needs of the system are so significant that a long-term, comprehensive funding plan would be required to address the problem. This is not just a CTA problem. Metra and Pace have an operating problem, too.

“The work of the Auditor General and others has confirmed our crisis,” said Reilly. “It is the tough reality we and lawmakers face – we have to take action if we want to save the system.”

In addition to the impacts on service and riders, failure to approve a new funding plan will prevent key CTA pension and healthcare reforms from being instituted. “We have a golden opportunity to bring real, meaningful change to the way the CTA operates and save taxpayers and riders millions of dollars,” noted Jim Reilly. “We should not let this chance pass us by; it’s too important for the future of the system.”

The RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace have worked together over the last 2 years to develop a strategic plan, institute important reforms and develop a new funding plan for transit operations and capital needs. Short term funding assistance from the State of Illinois has delayed reductions in service and increases in fares, but our 2008 budget cannot continue to delay these cost-cutting moves.

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*About the RTA: The RTA provides financial oversight, funding and regional planning for the three public transit operations 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](http://www.rtachicago.com) and [www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org](http://www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org).*