



# **Regional Transportation Authority**

## **For immediate release**

**DATE:** April 1, 2009

**CONTACT:** Diane Palmer, RTA Communications Director

Office: 312-913-3282

Cell: 312-907-6902

### **Only Senior Ride Free Smart Cards can be used for free rides starting April 2**

*Seniors with reduced fare cards will be charged a reduced fare after April 1*

CHICAGO - The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is reminding seniors that starting on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, only Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permits can be used by seniors living in the RTA service region for free rides on the CTA, Metra and Pace. April 1 is the last day that reduced fare cards will be allowed for free rides. Thereafter, seniors with a senior reduced fare permit will be required to pay the reduced fare.

Because the RTA had to implement the program in a 60-day timeframe to start on March 17 last year, the decision was made for seniors to continue using reduced fare cards that thousands already had. The RTA sent notifications to seniors who reside in the RTA's six-county service region: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties that held a Senior Reduced Fare Permit, advising that the RTA was transitioning card holders to the new Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permit. Now beginning April 2<sup>nd</sup>, only Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permits can be used to obtain free rides. If a senior has not yet applied for a Senior Ride Free Permit, they can still do so by contacting the RTA's customer service department at 312-913-3110 or visiting our Customer Service Center, 165 N. Jefferson, Chicago.

Smart cards are easier for customers to use. They are simple touch and go cards and do not have to be inserted into the fare collection box. They're also thicker like a credit card and cannot be easily damaged.

The current Senior Reduced Fare Permit can still be used on all CTA, Pace and Metra lines, but will always require reduced fare payment without exceptions beginning on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. It will continue to serve seniors who do not live within the six-county region and are required to pay the reduced fare or seniors in the region who choose to continue to pay a reduced fare.

#### ***If I have a Senior Reduced Fare Permit***

If you still have a Senior Reduced Fare Permit, you should have received a notice from the RTA to replace it with a Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permit. Please fill out the form and return it as soon as possible to the RTA. If you have not received a notice to replace your permit, call customer service at 312-913-3110. Because you are transitioning to a Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permit, you will not be required to take another photograph as one is already on file from your Senior Reduced Fare Permit.

## **Only Senior Ride Free Smart Cards can be used - Page 2**

### ***For First-Time Applicants***

If a senior does not have the RTA Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permit and is within three weeks of their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, they can sign up at the RTA's Customer Service Center between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. (weekdays) at 165 N. Jefferson (at Lake St.) in Chicago. They can also sign up at any one of the over 200 registration sites in the region. To find a site nearby, seniors can go to [www.rtachicago.com/seniorsridefree](http://www.rtachicago.com/seniorsridefree), [www.rtachicago.com/infocenter/reducedfare.asp](http://www.rtachicago.com/infocenter/reducedfare.asp) or call 836-7000 from any local area code and give the operator their zip code to find the closest location.

During the registration process, applicants will be required to present government issued identification to verify their age as well as a photo (approximately passport size – 1 1/2" square) will either be taken or will need to be provided by the applicant.

Applying for the Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permit can only be done in-person and will take 3-4 weeks to process.

###

*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](http://www.rtachicago.com) and [www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org](http://www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org).*