



Regional Transportation Authority

For immediate release

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Deadline for seniors to change to Smart Card fast approaching

Seniors with reduced fare cards will be charged a reduced rate after April 1, 2009

CHICAGO - The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is reminding seniors who have not changed their senior reduced fare cards to the Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permit, and are eligible, to do so if they want to continue enjoying free rides. After April 1, 2009, seniors who use their reduced fare cards on Metra, CTA rail and bus and Pace bus will be charged the standard reduced rate.

The RTA sent notifications to seniors who reside in the RTA's six-county service region: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties, and who hold a Senior Reduced Fare Permit, advising that the RTA is transitioning card holders to the new Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permit. All seniors must use the new smart card beginning April 2 to continue receiving free rides. After April 1, Senior Reduced Fare Permit users will be charged the reduced fare.

"The RTA has been working on this transition early to get seniors signed up for the smart cards to avoid delays come April," said Steve Schlickman, executive director, RTA. "We wanted to ensure that all seniors change their cards to continue enjoying the benefits of free rides on the CTA, Metra and Pace without any complications."

Smart cards are easier 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. It will serve seniors who do not live within the six-county region and are required to pay the reduced fare.

If I have a Senior Reduced Fare Permit

If you currently 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 to

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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.

For First-Time Applicants

If a senior does not have the RTA Senior Ride Free Smart Card Permit or a Senior Reduced Fare Permit and is within three weeks of their 65th 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 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, 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 or Senior Reduced Fare Permit can only be done in-person and will take 3-4 weeks to process.

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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.