



RPM Next Phases Planning Study Public Meeting FAQs - March 14 & 16, 2023

Below is a summary of the questions and answers discussed in each of the meetings.

I. Red Purple Modernization (RPM) Program Background

1. What is the timeline for RPM Next Phases Planning Study?

The RPM Next Phases Planning Study started in 2021 and is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

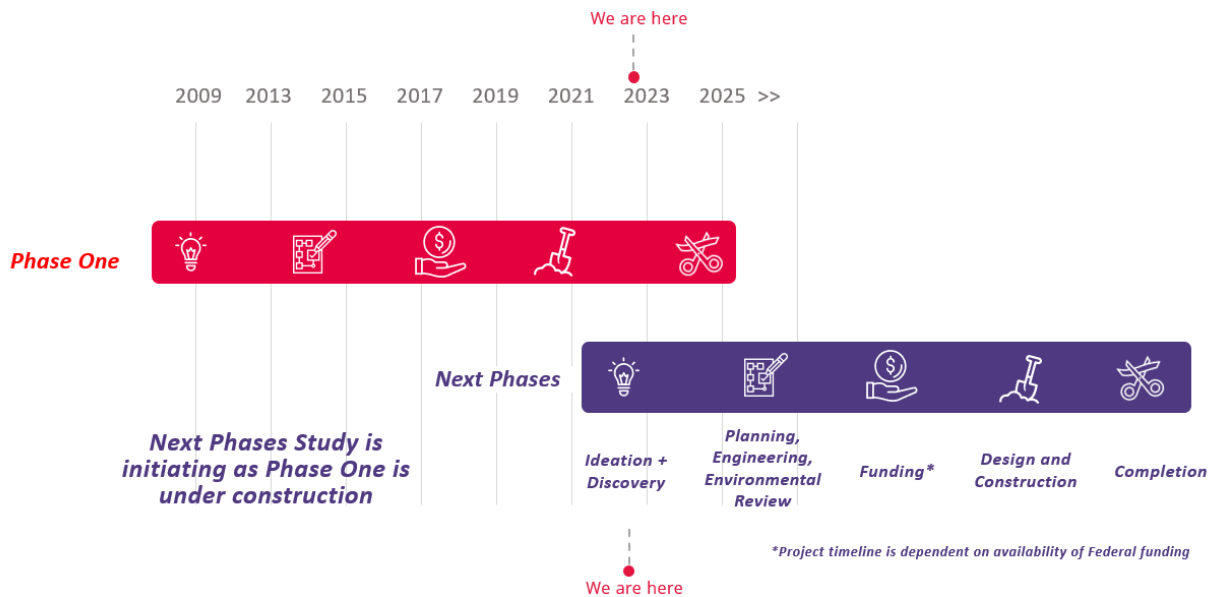
2. When would stations under RPM Next Phases be improved or reconstructed?

This study is part of the planning process for eventual construction and improvements. However, there are multiple steps before construction can happen, including environmental impacts review, design, engineering, and securing funding. This planning study will help CTA identify an implementation strategy to advance the project through these stages. For reference, initial planning for RPM started in 2009 and after following similar steps, construction for RPM Phase One started in 2019.

These important and complex infrastructure projects take time and due diligence, which is why CTA is starting the RPM Next Phases planning process now.

3. Where are we in the overall RPM process?

CTA started initial planning efforts for the 9.6-mile RPM corridor from Belmont to Linden in 2009. The planning work for the full corridor included a variety of critical considerations including expanding the capacity of the corridor, modernizing and improving the current infrastructure, ADA accessibility, and consolidating stops while increasing stations' entrances. In late 2013, the Federal Transit Administration and CTA developed a tailored approach for phased improvements to the RPM corridor. The RPM Phase One program planning began in 2014 and includes the construction of the Belmont Bypass and the reconstruction of four Red Line stations (Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, and Bryn Mawr). Construction started in 2019 and is expected to be completed in 2025. The RPM Next Phases study is helping CTA identify the future phases of RPM. A timeline graphic is below that includes RPM Phase One and Next Phases.



4. Why are you planning for improvements on the Red and Purple Lines considering COVID-19 and the related decrease in rail ridership?

The RPM Next Phases Planning Study is planning for the next 100 years. The Red Line is the CTA’s busiest rail line, traversing some of the densest, most transit-friendly neighborhoods in the country. A lot has changed with the pandemic, but we know that ridership is recovering, and the Red and Purple lines will continue to be critical infrastructure for Chicago and the northern suburbs. For example, in the first half of 2023, CTA has seen its highest ridership levels since 2020.

As transit ridership increases post-pandemic, the modernization of RPM infrastructure will continue to serve riders who need reliable, efficient service today and for decades to come.

We are planning for long-term transit investments. While there may be some changes in commuting patterns, a modern, efficient transit system will always be a key component of Chicago's transportation system.

II. Study Area Information

1. How did the study areas get their names?

Segments were named for station locations from south to north to match the naming convention from RPM Phase One (i.e.: “Lawrence to Bryn Mawr”). The segments are inclusive of track and structure sections that often extend past the station itself for ease of orientation.

2. Why does the study map on the website show the study area so far beyond the stations?

CTA is analyzing how to connect the RPM Next Phases segments to the RPM Phase One and Wilson station reconstructed segments. The RPM Next Phases study area includes infrastructure between the northern limits of the Belmont Bypass—north of Phase One track reconstruction near Cornelia Street—through the southern limits of the Wilson station project, near Montrose Avenue (and north of Sheridan station). It then continues from the northern limit of the Phase One project, north of Bryn Mawr near Ardmore Avenue, and then through the Purple Line terminus at Linden in Wilmette.

3. Are improvements to the Yellow Line being looked at in this study?

In general, analysis regarding the Yellow Line is not part of this study. Improvements to the Yellow Line are being analyzed only as part of the larger analysis of the Howard station and yard, where the Yellow Line terminates.

III. Public Outreach

1. How will you engage the community and stakeholders?

There will be two rounds of targeted community engagement. This engagement will provide participants with information about the study and gain feedback from the public that will help inform the study and recommendations.

Round 1- Complete

The first round of community engagement occurred in early 2023. CTA hosted two virtual information sessions/public meetings in March 2023. Recordings of the March 2023 meetings can be found [here](#). CTA also gathered public survey responses in March 2023 on how riders use the Red and Purple lines and station improvement preferences.

Round 2

The second round of community engagement is anticipated to take place later in 2023. The project website will provide study updates and information about the next round of community engagement.

2. How can we stay informed?

We encourage residents and the public to receive updates about the project. [Click here](#) to sign up for the RPM Next Phases Planning Study email list to receive project updates and hear about future opportunities to provide feedback. Members of the public can also request to be added to the email list and submit feedback or questions by emailing rpnnextphases@transitchicago.com.

IV. Accessibility & ADA

1. Why is it important to make rail stations accessible?

Improvements made under the guidance of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will provide access to transit services for people with disabilities. ADA requires that newly constructed rail stations be readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities – meaning that they must be designed and constructed in accordance with ADA standards. By making these stations accessible, we are making sure that all people within the community can access and benefit from public transit services. CTA has a long-term plan, the [All Stations Accessibility Program \(ASAP\)](#), to make the remaining inaccessible stations accessible, including all of the stations included in the multi-phase RPM program.

2. What will be done to address accessibility on the Purple Line/Evanston Branch?

CTA has a long-term plan, the [All Stations Accessibility Program \(ASAP\)](#), to make all of its inaccessible stations accessible, including stations on the Evanston Branch. Currently, the Linden and Davis stations are accessible, and the ASAP plan calls for future phases of the RPM program to address the remaining stations. Any station that is rebuilt or renovated along the RPM corridor will be made accessible.

3. Can CTA add elevators now to make stations accessible instead of this long-term project?

Upgrading the RPM Next Phases stations to make them ADA accessible is a complex and costly undertaking. This is a big priority for CTA, and in most cases, accessibility cannot be added to a station without modernization. For example, platforms need to be widened, station entrances need to be reconfigured, and additional safety requirements for exiting need to be met. Not only are there physical space constraints and complexities to add elevators, but other conditions in the entryways and platforms make it so they would still not be ADA compliant if only elevators were added. Full reconstruction of the stations and the surrounding infrastructure will be necessary to provide accessibility for customers.

V. Stations – General

1. Is the study considering historic elements of stations?

Yes. This section of the rail system (and most of the stations within it) are over 50 years old, which triggers state and federal historic preservation guidelines to be followed. Additionally, many of the stations in the study area include historic and architecturally significant features. Specific preservation measures and additional historical research and analysis will be considered in more detail as part of the environmental review stage of RPM Next Phases.

2. Will station modernization improve safety and security?

Future station modernizations will include customer safety improvements. Examples of safety improvements include additional lighting and creating more space at entryways and on platforms to improve sightlines for staff and customers. These design strategies are in addition to the high-definition surveillance camera network in place at all stations. Station designs that include elements that enhance safety and security are not a part of this study but will be a part of later design stages.

3. Is CTA acquiring properties to reconstruct stations or tracks?

Any acquisition needs will be identified after additional engineering and environmental work is complete. That work will be conducted after the current planning study is complete and is still several years away. CTA will conduct public outreach for any property that would need to be acquired for the project as part of the environmental review process.

4. Will you be consolidating stations?

The Red and Purple Lines are unique in these areas because many of the stations are relatively close together compared to other stations on the CTA system. These Red and Purple line stations have been serving their respective neighborhoods for many decades and provide important transit connections for residents. Understanding these dynamics, this study picks up from the previous RPM Vision Study conducted in 2009, which included looking at stop consolidation for some areas. Stop consolidation is a reduction in the number of train stops coupled with the creation of new entrances at adjacent stops to improve station access points. Additional analysis and public outreach would be conducted on a range of considerations for any stop consolidation. These include impacts to the community, implications for new infrastructure, and customer travel times.

5. Why is CTA considering fully rebuilding stations when some Red Line stations were already rehabbed?

The improvements made at the Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, Thorndale, Granville, Morse, and Jarvis stations in 2012 were intended to be interim. The useful life of these investments was understood to be temporary, with the goal that each of these stations would eventually be fully reconstructed to include accessibility. The stations not included in RPM Phase One will have these interim renovations in place longer. One of the most significant factors influencing the useful life of these interim renovation investments relates to the embankment structure, which is from the early part of the 20th century and makes it difficult to manage water infiltration and other maintenance issues. The full reconstruction taking place as part of RPM Phase One will replace this embankment structure with new station and track support structures at Lawrence, Argyle, and Berwyn.

VI. Station Access

1. How will the RPM Next Phases Planning Study improve connectivity to the Red and Purple Lines?

CTA will continue to consider connectivity to stations throughout the RPM Next Phases planning process. As CTA begins the planning process for station improvements, considerations for how customers walk, bike, and transfer from other modes (like bike, bus, or Metra) to the Red and Purple line stations will be taken into account. Efforts will be made to coordinate not just with CTA's Bus Operations staff, but also Metra and Pace, to work toward more seamless transfers where possible.

2. Will connections to Metra stations in Evanston be improved?

Connectivity between regional transit providers is an important objective for CTA. CTA is in frequent coordination with both Metra and Pace and will continue to be throughout the RPM Next Phases Planning Study.

VII. Stations – Howard

1. Is the study looking to improve Howard station?

Analyzing improvements at the Howard (bus and rail) terminal and yard is an important task for this study. Managing rail operations at Howard is complex because it is the only place on the CTA system where three lines (Red, Purple, and Yellow) terminate. Also, the facilities are within a densely developed area and adjacent to multiple historically significant buildings, which limits some options for reconfiguration. The goal of the RPM Next Phases Planning Study is to examine how to improve operations at the Howard terminal to support faster travel times, reduce bottlenecks, and add additional ridership capacity. CTA is analyzing options to streamline operations while balancing a limited footprint to fit the neighborhood context. Because of Howard's important role in the system, any improvements would positively impact the entire Red, Purple, and Yellow lines.

VIII. Stations – Sheridan

1. Is the study looking to improve Sheridan station?

Identifying improvements for Sheridan station is part of this study scope. Given the age and physical condition of the station, it is anticipated to require full reconstruction. Additionally, the limited footprint available and current track layout makes it challenging to reconfigure the station to add elevators and widen platforms, which are needed to make the station ADA accessible. Modernization options for Sheridan have been studied in previous planning efforts dating back to 2009, and this study is building upon those efforts while examining the current conditions.

2. Are you planning to relocate Sheridan station?

As part of this study, CTA is looking several options for Sheridan station, which includes options to relocate the station in the same general area as the existing station. These relocation options will be evaluated together with alternatives to modernize the station in its existing footprint. The proposed station modernization concept(s), including any plan for relocation, would be presented to the public during the planning process.

3. Will the “Sheridan Curve” be straightened?

The “S-curve” that the Sheridan station platforms are within slows down train speeds, but there are very limited options to improve this condition while minimizing major community impacts. The tracks were originally constructed to avoid adjacent buildings, and this area is still densely developed and includes multiple historic resources adjacent to the tracks. The study is analyzing options to improve track geometry that takes the existing neighborhood context into account.

IX. Stations – Central

1. Why hasn’t the Central Purple Line station been rebuilt yet?

The station was originally built in 1908, rebuilt in 1931, and needs to be reconstructed to make it accessible to all. The Central station also has historically significant features and finishes in the station house, which need to be considered before any modifications can be made. Like several other stations on the Evanston Branch of the Purple Line, this station is not ADA accessible and will be modernized to be made fully accessible in a future phase of the RPM program.

VIII. Service Changes

1. Will an additional transfer station between the Red and Purple Lines be considered?

CTA will consider connectivity to stations throughout the Next Phases planning process. For Purple Line Express service, there are currently four transfer stations that connect to the Red Line: Howard, Wilson, Belmont, and Fullerton. The Wilson station was added as a transfer station in 2017. Previous studies of the RPM corridor evaluated a transfer point at the Loyola station, and the current planning process will reassess this option. Any proposed new transfer station would be presented to the public before moving forward with further planning.

2. Will Purple Line Express service hours be extended?

In the near term, CTA is prioritizing existing service while experiencing the effects of a nationwide transit operator shortage related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A key component of CTA’s post-pandemic recovery efforts is strengthening the workforce to provide reliable transit services to meet current and future ridership demands.

As part of this study, service delivery concepts are being evaluated to address capacity constraints, though any recommended changes would likely not be implemented for several years. Separate from this study, extending service on the Purple Line Express is something CTA would consider in the future depending on resources.

VIII. Funding

1. How is RPM Next Phases being funded?

As the project progresses, funding sources will be identified and obtained for environmental review, design, and construction. These potential sources include the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant funding (Core Capacity), which is the same source that funded a portion of the RPM Phase One construction along with other federal, state, and local sources. Assessing these multiple funding strategies is part of this planning study project scope.

2. Has funding for implementation been identified?

This planning study is the first step in the process to make the case for funding. As CTA moves through the process, the work from this phase will support the request for federal and local funding. Funding for related Red Line improvement projects like RPM Phase One and Red Line Extension have relied on competitive federal grant programs such as the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant and local funding in the form of Transit Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts. Information on RPM Phase One local funding, including the Transit TIF, can be found [here](#).

3. What is required for the federal Core Capacity funding? What does 10% capacity increase mean?

The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Core Capacity program provides funding for infrastructure improvements that allow for a 10% increase in corridor service capacity where trains are most crowded. When looking at aligning improvements with this funding source, the project must consider how many more passengers can be accommodated in the peak hour and in the peak direction. For CTA, that means running enough service to accommodate 10% more passengers traveling in the peak hour of the morning rush period in the southbound direction. This may be accomplished by infrastructure improvements that allow for more frequent train schedules or lengthening trains, among other options.

4. How much will RPM Next Phases cost?

Costs for the future steps in the RPM Next Phases process, including environmental documentation, engineering, and construction, have not been determined yet. The specific infrastructure improvements need to be identified and placed into phases for cost estimates to be developed. The current RPM Next Phases Study is an early planning process and identifying potential funding strategies is part of the study.