September 22, 2026. Chicago Transit Board Regular Meeting Minutes.

Noticed for 9:30 a.m. Commenced at 9:30 a.m.
YouTube Link to View Video of Meeting

AGENDA: The posted agenda for the meeting is available at www.transitchicago.com, "Chicago Transit Board", "Meeting Notices, Agendas, and Minutes", (09/22/2026) (Regular Board Meeting), "Agenda".

WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS AND ROLL CALL: Acting General Counsel Sisavanh Baker called the September 22, 2026, meeting of the Chicago Transit Board to order at 9:30 a.m. In her introduction she advised that she was the Acting Geneal Counsel of the Chicago Transit Authority and that she would be presiding over the meeting until the board elected a chair. She explained that this was the first CTA Board meeting under the Northern Illinois Transit Act. She then asked Georgette Greenlee, Secretary of the CTA Board to call the roll.

ROLL CALL: Directors: Oswaldo Alvarez, Lester Barclay, Neema Jha, Ann Kalayil, Tom Kotarac and Nedra Sims Fears. Secretary Greenlee announced that there was a quorum with six board members present. Acting General Counsel Baker announced that Director Eaddy would be participating in the meeting remotely barring any objections. Director Jha moved to admit Director Eaddy into the meeting remotely. The motion was seconded by Director Kalayil. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

SAFETY BRIEFING: The Chicago Transit Authority's Fire Marshal Tim Taylor presented a safety and security briefing to the meeting attendees.

Acting General Counsel Baker then invited each CTA director to introduce themselves.

- Director Oswaldo Alverez: Director Alverez currently serves as the executive director of the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation, which is the non-profit arm of the Illinois Latino Caucus. The ILLCF is in partnership with the University of Illinois and together they collaborate on public policies. Prior to his current position he was appointed by Governor J.B. Pritzker to serve as the director of the census for the State of Illinois.

  He was born and raised in Chicago and is very excited to serve on the board of CTA.

- Lester Barclay: Chairman Lester Barclay is an attorney who has practiced law in the state of Illinois, primarily in the areas of family and probate law for over 40 years. His first encounter with the CTA occurred in 1979 when he worked for CTA as a summer intern. He also spent time as

outside counsel to the CTA for about 10 years in the labor department working on contract issues and the enforcement of CTA's contract.

In 2018 he was appointed to serve the CTA as chair of the Citizens Advisory Board and was appointed to the CTA Board as chairman in 2021 by Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

He is excited about the accomplishments of the CTA over the past five (5) years. He is excited about the new legislation and wants to be a part of the future of the CTA.

- Neema Jha: Vice Chair Neema Jha has served on the CTA Board for the past four (4) years and is excited to continue. Professionally Vice Chair Jha has helped large organizations transform, and that is how she found her way to the CTA. She has been focusing on how new technology transformations create innovation and new business ideas.

  She has lived in Chicago since 2005. She is originally from Kathmandu, Nepal, but she found her husband here, her daughter was born here and Chicago is home. She is excited about the new Board and the journey that is being embarked upon. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

- Ann Kalayil: Director Kalayil was born and brought up in Chicago. She grew up in Rogers Park and has been in Chicago for most of her life. She earned her PhD in History at the University of Wisconsin Madison and earned a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science. She has worked in IT, academia and served as the Regional Administrator for the Government Service Administration (GSA) under President Barack Obama. She understands large organizations, transformation and infrastructure. She was later appointed by President Toni Precwinkle to serve Cook County as the Bureau Chief for the Bureau of Asset Management.

  She believes that the CTA is at a time where a big difference can be made in the rider's experience. She is interested in making transit more accessible and safe to riders across the region.

- Tom Kotarac: Director Kotarac serves as the Senior Vice President of the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago. He is privileged and honored to serve as the Acting Chair of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority.

  He believes that he is participating in a very historic moment where the governor and the Illinois General Assembly have given the CTA and the other regional transit service boards an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have a fresh start and ingrain transit into the long-term economic growth of the region. He views the CTA as the core of the Chicago regional transit system. He is excited and honored to be with his distinguished colleagues on this day.

- Nedra Sims Fears: Director Fears is happy to be in attendance and is Chicago born and bred. She is the Executive Director of the Greater Chatham Initiative which is a nonprofit organization that serves four of Chicago's south side communities. The organization is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. She is focused on community and economic development and believes that transit is the backbone of how communities go to work, school and recreate. She noted that 65% of the people in the neighborhoods she serves do not have cars. They love our transit system, and they want it to work better.

  She was also recently appointed to serve on the board of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority.

- Michael Eaddy: Director Michael Eaddy is serving his second term on the CTA Board. He is a native Chicagoan, born and raised on the west side of the city. He is president of the People's Community Development Association of Chicago organized in 1999. The organization has a three-fold mission for serving reentry populations and provides job training/placement, engages at-risk youth through summer employment (mentoring/after-school care) and develops affordable housing.

  He is also the vice-chairman of the Westside Community Development Collaboration which is a group of 12 faith-based community development corporations and he is the pastor of the People's Church of the Harvest, where he has been pastoring for 47 years on the West Side and recently appointed as a jurisdictional bishop giving direction to 60 churches throughout the city of Chicago and surrounding suburbs.

Acting President Nora Leerhsen then gave welcoming remarks to the CTA Board on behalf of the "11,500 employees and CTA's executive team." She stated that everyone is excited about this new era and she thanked them for their service helping move CTA forward.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Acting General Counsel Baker advanced the agenda to Public Comments. Secretary Greenlee advised that the Board Office received seven (7) requests for public comments prior to the board meeting, one that was received the morning of the board meeting and that a written comment had been submitted by John Paul Jones.

Of the eight (8) people who submitted requests to give public comments the following persons were present and are as follows:

- Darlene Hale: concerned about safety and accessibility for disabled riders and senior citizens
- Adam Mack: concerned about public safety, service schedule changes and the 2027 CTA

budget

- Patricia Puente: concerned about excessive noise from other riders on the buses
- Derek Basett: concerned about security, the CTA's security plan and smoking on trains

EXECUTIVE SESSION: CTA's Acting General Counsel Sisavanh Baker advised that there was a need for the Board to recess to an Executive Session pursuant to 5ILCS 120/2 (c)(1).

Director Jha moved the Board recess to the Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Director Alvarez. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

At the conclusion of the Executive Session Director Kotarac moved for the Board to reconvene. The motion was seconded by Director Fears. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

MOTION TO AMEND THE AGENDA: Director Kotarac moved to amend the agenda by moving New Business up in the agenda to be heard after Board Matters item 4H. The motion was seconded by Director Jha. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

BOARD MATTERS: Director Kotarac moved to consider Board Matters items 4A through 4G en bloc. The motion was seconded by Director Jha. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Acting General Counsel Baker opened the floor for nominations for the position of Chair of the Chicago Transit Authority Board. The elected chairperson will require a vote of confirmation by the Illinois Senate.

Director Michael Eaddy nominated Lester Barclay as Chairperson of the CTA Boad. The nomination was seconded by Director Tom Kotarac. The roll call vote to elect Director Barclay Chairperson was unanimous.

Following the vote to elect Director Barclay as Chair of the CTA Board, Chairperson Barclay gave remarks. He affirmed that he was honored and ready to take on the responsibility at this significant moment for CTA and for transit in the region. He thanked his fellow board members for their support.

Director Kalayil, Director Eaddy, Director Jha, Director Fears, Director Alvarez and Acting President Leerhsen gave remarks ad offered words of encouragement and support to Chairperson Barclay.

NEW BUSINESS: The Chair recognized Director Fears. Director Fears nominated Director Neema Jha as Vice Chair of the CTA Board. She noted the significance of the moment for transition and change for transit in the Chicago area and stated that it was critical that the board's vice chair be a leader who was ready to meet the moment and be willing to embrace reform.

Director Kalayil seconded the nomination of Neema Jha for Vice Chairperson on the CTA Board. The nomination to elect Director Jha as Vice Chairperson of the Board passed in a unanimous roll call vote.

Vice Chairperson Jha stated that she was grateful and honored to serve as vice chairperson of the Board. She stated that she is prepared for the responsibility given that she brings four (4) years of experience serving on the Board, along with two decades of leading large, complex organizations through technology transformations. She thanked her fellow Board members for their vote of confidence.

BOARD MATTERS – CONTINUED: There being no additional New Business, the Board resumed the outstanding items under Board Matters.

Acting General Counsel introduced Item 4J under Board Matters on the agenda, which was a brief introduction and discussion of the need for the Board to identify committee assignments and determine whether they would like to engage in a conversation to create an ad hoc committee for the revision of the CTA Bylaws.

By consensus the Board decided to table the matter of committees and revisit the issue at the October 2026 meeting.

MINUTES: Chairman Barclay requested a motion to approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting of August 12, 2026. Vice Chairperson Jha moved, and the motion was seconded by Director Eaddy. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Acting President Leerhsen began her report by recognizing the exciting and historic moment for our region's transit system. She was happy to report that the CTA is in the strongest state that it has been in many years and is well positioned to move the region forward at this pivotal moment.

She again congratulated Chairman Barclay and Vice Chairperson Jha on their elections to board leadership.

She then invited CTA's Chief Financial Officer Tom McKone to assist as she focused her President's Report on various measurement tools and metrics that the CTA utilizes.

- Notable Achievements:
    - Ridership is at the highest it has been in six years

- In the last week of August, CTA's systemwide ridership hit a record high of 84% of the CTA's levels pre-pandemic
- Currently the CTA regularly exceeds 1.2 million rides per day
- The Red Line continues to see even steeper drops in crime and ridership on that branch increases as crime declines

- Security on the CTA:
  - Throughout 2026 there have been unprecedented reductions in crime across the CTA.
  - Year-to-date systemwide major crime is down 30%
  - Violent crime systemwide is also down 30%
  - Robberies are down 45%

- New Initiatives: The Safe Rides Specialist Program
  - Crisis intervention specialists
  - Community violence intervention specialists
  - Both of these initiatives will allow riders to see new personnel in purple vests who will assist riders and respond to their dynamic needs. This initiative will inform NITA as they development their Transit Ambassador Program.

Acting President Leerhsen thanked the Board for their support of the Transit Ambassador Program, and she thanked staff that is deploying the program. She acknowledged the notable amount of work that happens across departments to train the ambassadors and establish partnerships with [service providers.]

Key Developments: Acting President Leerhsen then noted a couple of key developments on the system:

- New station designs were unveiled for the Red Line Extension
- The Red Line Extension Community Office will be hosting an Open House in the upcoming weeks
- A new arts program, featuring live musical performances was also initiated

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE:

Tom McKone gave an overview on the reported public performance metrics that are provided on CTA's website. The Interactive Dashboard measures performance against a set of goals to deliver on-time, efficient, courteous, safe and clean service.

The Dashboard provides 21 pages of information, and it is updated mid-month. The information on the dashboard is required under state statute, and it provides other relevant information based on

feedback from riders and other constituents. The website URL is: www.transitchicago/performance.com

Donald Bonds, CTA's Chief Transit Operations Officer and Kim Hawkins, CTA's Vice President of Training and Workforce Development joined the presentation to assist in explaining the metrics presented.

- Scheduled Service Delivered for Bus and Rail Metric
- Personnel and Hiring
- Workforce Development and Training
- Fleet Management and Maintenance
- Disturbances and Crime
- Sanitation and Cleaning

There were comments from board members and there was discussion.

RIDERSHIP UPDATE:

Acting President Leerhsen then invited Molly Poppe, CTA's Chief of Planning and Innovation Officer to give a presentation on ridership on the system. Elsa Gutierrez, CTA's Vice President of Scheduling and Service Planning joined her.

The Ridership Update covered the period from January 2026 through the end of August 2026.

- CTA's averages about a million rides a day
- The Authority has a 5% year-over-year growth
- The highest ridership days correlate to days when students return to school

They also presented statistics related to the following:

- Daily Bus versus Rail Ridership
- Weekend Ridership
- Impact of the Frequent Bus Network
- Impact of the Red Purple Modernization (RPM) on increasing ridership

Following the presentation there were questions from members of the board and there was discussion.

FINANCE REPORT: CTA's Chief Financial Officer, Tom McKone, presented the monthly financial results from the month of July. There were questions and there was discussion.

Following the Finance Report Acting President Leerhsen asked for a point of personal privilege to acknowledge the imminent departure of JuanPablo Prieto, CTA's Director of Diversity, who will be leaving the CTA at the end of September to take a position with the City of Chicago as the Commissioner of Fleet and Facilities Management.

JuanPablo Prieto gave parting remarks and there were congratulations and commendations given by several of the CTA Board members.

ORDINANCES AND CONTRACTS:

Following the recognition of Mr. Prieto, board members reviewed and approved the following ordinances:

> AGENDA NO. 7A: An ordinance authorizing a lease to RS Convenience Stores, Inc., of retail concession space located at 127 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois (Blue Line)

Chief Infrastructure Officer Bill Mooney gave the presentation about the ordinance. There were questions and discussion about the ordinance.

Director Kalayil moved, and Director Kotarac seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

> AGENDA NO. 7B: An ordinance authorizing a Grade Separation Agreement with the Commuter Rail Division of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority, a division of Northern Illinois Transit Authority ("Metra"), for the Red Line Extension (RLE) Project

Chief Infrastructure Officer Bill Mooney gave the presentation about the ordinance. There were questions and discussions.

Director Eaddy moved, and Director Jha seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7C - CONTRACT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS:

Then, after extensive review by the board, Chairman Barclay asked for the following motion to place thirteen (13) contracts on the omnibus and recommended that the Board approve the omnibus:

The approved items are as follows:

1. Contract Number C26FT103313594:	$	611,095.00
2. Contract Number C15FI101568878:	$	3,500,000.00
3. Contract Number B23OP00683:	$	384,000.00
4. Contract Number C25FI103256905:	$	120,000,000.00
5. Contract Number C22RI102826940:	$	2,331,157.00
6. Contract Number C23FR102838427:	$	1,929,438.00
7. Contract Number B21OP02050:	$	885,000.00
8. Contract Number B22OP01851:	$	350,000.00
9. Contract Number B26OP01886:	$	460,000.00
10. Contract Number B21OP01982:	$	450,000.00
11. Contract Number B22OP00760:	$	140,000.00
12. Contract Number B19OP01976:	$	75,000.00
13. Contract Number B25OP00260:	$	550,000.00

Director Kalayil moved, and Director Kotarac seconded the motion to place the seven (7) contracts on the omnibus. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE OMNIBUS AND RECOMMEND THE OMNIBUS FOR BOARD APPROVAL: Director Kotarac then moved to approve the omnibus and recommend the omnibus for board approval. Director Kalayil seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chairperson Barclay asked for a motion to adjourn the September 22, 2026, Chicago Transit Board meeting.

After being moved by Director Kotarac and seconded by Director Eaddy, the motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

APPROVED: _____

Secretary of the CTA Board of Directors

Date: 10/27/2026