

## **April 9, 2025. Chicago Transit Board Regular Meeting Minutes.**

Noticed for 10:00 a.m. Commenced at 10:59 a.m.

AGENDA: The posted agenda for the meeting is available at [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com), "Chicago Transit Board", "Meeting Notices, Agendas, and Minutes", (04/09/2025) (Regular Board Meeting), "Agenda".

There was a roll call vote.

**ROLL CALL:** Directors: Lester L. Barclay (Chairman), L. Bernard Jakes, Rosa Ortiz, Roberto Requejo, and Neema Jha was present.

There was a quorum with 5 members present.

**REMOTE ATTENDANCE:** Chairman Barclay advised the Board that Director Eaddy was unable to attend the meeting in person due to a travel obligations connected to work commitment. Director Jha moved that Director Eaddy be permitted to attend the meeting remotely and Director Ortiz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Director Ortiz moved to permit both Director Jakes and Director Lee to attend the meeting remotely and Director Jha seconded the motion. There was a roll call vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Acting President Nora Leerhsen gave the President's Report:

Acting President Leerhsen thanked the Chairman and Directors for the opportunity to give an update on a few key initiatives and activities over the past month and on those that are planned in the future.

- She thanked Chairman Barclay, Director Lee and Director Eaddy for attending the CTA's Austin Green Line Stop groundbreaking. The \$25 million dollar project will make the stop accessible and is a symbol of the commitment that the agency has to accessibility. Other attendees were Mayor Brandon Johnson, the Commissioner from the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, Congressman Danny Davis, Illinois Senate President Don Harmon and other dignitaries.

- ACCESSIBILITY UPDATE: There are six new stations that are going to be announced as newly accessible:
  1. Austin Station - Spring 2026
  2. Racine on the Blue Line
  3. Four Red-Purple Modernization Stations – Fall 2025
  
- City of Chicago Construction Season – Press Conference: Acting President Leerhsen and other CTA leaders attended a press conference with Mayor Brandon to announce the kickoff of the city's construction season. An infrastructure announcement was made which highlighted the RPM project and at the end of the year the groundbreaking for the Red Line Extension.
  
- April is Second Chance Month:
  1. CTA has a program that is a national model. It helps participants remove barriers to employment and continue building a strong foundation for personal and professional growth.
  2. In honor of this month, CTA will be hosting a series of empowering workshops for program participants.
  3. CTA hosted an expungement workshop at CTA headquarters where 70 Second Chance apprentices participated in a day of learning and empowerment, including hands-on assistance, navigating the expungement process. (NOTE: The law has evolved to advance and require employers to not consider criminal backgrounds in the way they used to consider them.
  4. This year there are 30 Second Chance apprentices who have become permanent employees at CTA and in comparison, to last year when there were 8 full time hires and that demonstrates that the CTA is working at a pace previously unseen.
  
- April is Autism Awareness Month: The agency is executing a campaign that we have had in the works for a long time that we're really excited about:

Since April 1<sup>st</sup> if you have been at a CTA rail station you may have heard the voice of a child across the loudspeakers promoting Autism Awareness Month. This is a part of a collaboration that the CTA has with the Autism Transit Project that has worked with transit agencies across the country to raise awareness around autism.

- CTA & Youth Projects:
  1. The CTA's One Summer Chicago application is open online. We go above and beyond when it comes to supporting high school students here at CTA.
  2. We also hosted a pre-apprenticeship fair at South Suburban College in South Holland on March 28<sup>th</sup>. This fair was free and open to the public. There were 261 individuals who

attended, and it targeted South Suburban high school juniors and seniors. There were 18 exhibitors at the fair, including CTA staff, workforce development partners, contractors, trade unions and pre-apprenticeship training providers.

3. Acting President Leerhsen also had a meeting with Alderman Hall of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ward who is very interested in youth involvement and making connections with our agency from the high school level.
- Transit Employee Appreciation Day: Acting President Leerhsen had the honor to ravel around the city for the whole day thanking CTA employees. She went to several locations and met with over 150 employees throughout the day. A key component to her leadership approach is staying in touch with employees, making sure they see her and that she hears from them.
  - COMMUNICATIONS: Acting President Leerhsen has launched a new podcast entitled, “Moving Experiences: Stories of the CTA.” For the inaugural episode in honor of Women’s History Mont she interviewed Arlanna Johnson, Director of Bus Operations, and Jeannie Alexander, Vice President of Rail Operations. It was a great success.
  - SECURITY UPDATE: The CTA designated \$3 million dollars for new security initiatives in the FY2025 budget. A key component to the success of the security initiatives is making sure there is stakeholder engagement before taking any action in designing a pilot. An update on the plan for stakeholder engagement will be given next month. Laura Castillo is putting that plan together and the agency will be meeting with the ADA Advisory Committee and other entities as we continue to move forward.
  - STATE LEGISLATION – BUDGET MATTERS:
    1. There is a lot of overlap with the issue of security in the legislative conversations that have been taking place. Acting President Leerhsen is monitoring how the issue of [safety and security] might play into commitments that legislators are looking for the CTA to make and discussions that are taking place in terms of innovative ways to look at improving customer experience.
    2. On March 27, 2025, Acting President Leerhsen presented to the RTA Board scenarios that were discussed with the CTA Board in March in regard to potential service cuts that will be necessary in the event there is a serious budget shortfall in 2026. The RTA meeting presented an opportunity to have a good, robust discussion on the realities of what is at stake across all of the regional transit agencies and what funding will provide.
    3. On April 2, 2025, Acting President Leerhsen along with the transit agency service boards

at a Senate Transportation Committee hearing in Springfield. It was another good discussion of the service impacts as well as what service would be provided if funding is received.

4. She continues to have good conversations with legislators. Key meetings are taking place on these topics as well as on topics with people who have designated themselves as being on the opposing side of an issue. Acting President Leerhsen wants to make sure that the agency is building bridges across opinions. "Everyone that's talking about transit cares about transit. There are shared goals, and she believes we can get somewhere when we agree upon the right way to move the region forward.
  5. She thinks that the public and the legislators are aware of the severity of the funding issue. The CTA leadership is working hard to make sure that CTA's interests are protected throughout the process.
- Clean & Green Spring Service Tour: The Clean and Green Spring Service Tour will take place on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. This is the agencies annual volunteer community service project at CTA where the agency finds key work locations and staff volunteers during the morning to clean up the area around the work location and in the neighboring community.

#### **RESPONSE from CTA BOARD MEMBERS:**

1. Chairman Barclay thanked Acting President Leerhsen for her report. He commended her and her team on the successful rollout of the bus frequency initiative. The board has received an update on the progress of the rollout during briefing sessions and he is pleased with the results. This is a story that when it is told needs to emphasize that promises were made, and promises have been delivered.
  - He gave a special acknowledgment to the Bus Operations Team, and Chief Transit Operations Officer, Don Bonds. The hiring and behind the scenes coordination that went into the effort also played a big role. He is looking forward to seeing additional routes added to the network.
  - Chairman Barclay also stated that he was pleased to hear about recent security efforts implemented to directly address persistent customer concerns around security, particularly smoking on trains, which is a top customer concern. He is encouraged by the anti-smoking mission pilot and recommends the CTA team to expand those efforts to increase visibility and awareness to our customers to show that the agency is not only listening but is acting with urgency.
  - He also addressed the end of the Illinois legislative session in Springfield. He affirmed the work that Acting President Leerhsen and the CTA team have been

diligently doing in Springfield to engage with legislators to make the care for sustainable and equitable transit funding. He believes that the conversations in Springfield are critical for ensuring that the message of CTA is heard loud and clear in regard to the work that the agency is doing to improve service. Funding is essential to continue to make progress.

2. Director Requejo joined the Chairman in congratulating the team on the success of the frequent bus network which is a promise that the delivery frequency will be at 10 minutes or less for CTA bus riders.

- Regarding legislation, he discerns that the agency's budget request will hinge on the identification of funding sources and how the gap may be bridged that exists in the budget for 2026.
- He is hopeful that the CTA addresses the issue of funding from a long range perspective versus a perspective that only seeks to close the immediate gap. He wants the agency to apply an approach to seeking funding that still affords CTA the wherewithal to think big and to think about long term, multi-generational solutions.
- Are we benchmarking funding sources that are not used by CTA but that other transit agencies around the country do use?
- Is transit orientated development a funding source that we have not begun to explore?

Acting President Leerhsen responded:

- She acknowledged that there has been a tension between reform and funding that must be addressed before discussing identifying alternative sources of funding and agreed that CTA needs to be a leader on the issue of funding so that the agency does not receive a band aid but is able to move forward.
- She believes that the call for reform requires that the CTA recognize the improvements that are being requested from across the region.
- She then identified what the agency has been advocating for from the Illinois legislature:
  - Sustainable funding,
  - Reliable funding
  - Funding that provides the level of service that the region needs.
- She believes that there is an appetite to discuss the \$1.5 billion that is needed and to advocate for service beyond what CTA currently offers and that excites her.
- The agency is also analyzing other funding sources to ensure that CTA is looking at them responsibly and in a smart way.

Director Requejo thanked Acting President Leerhsen for her response and stated that the reason why he wants CTA to promote new ideas and be a leader in this conversation is because of the commitment that CTA has made to equity. Everyone is not committed to equity and some of the sources that are being circulated are not going to result in being the equitable way to pay for service and improvements.

There will be those who make less and will pay more than the ones who have more.

He also thinks that it is important to make the public culture a part of the conversation. He doesn't think that people understand:

- (1) How much it cost to run transit.
- (2) What the benefits are and
- (3) How transit systems compare to a car-orientated infrastructure.

He thinks that these points should be a part of a public campaign, because he doesn't think that people understand the costs and the savings. He wants the CTA to be more transparent and more up-front.

3. Director Ortiz stated that reminding people how affordable the CTA is along with the frequency promise could be a great story line. She then congratulated staff on the increased frequency for buses.
4. Director Eaddy commended Acting President Leerhsen on the matter of the legislation moving in the right direction. He then asked- in respect to CTA's Second Chance Program, about the path for more advanced opportunities within the CTA.
  - Acting President Leerhsen explained that once an apprentice works for the agency their path through the CTA would be similar to any employee that is currently employed.
  - She also offered to get him data from the past years of the paths that individual apprentices have taken.

Director Eaddy then asked about the CTA One-Summer-Chicago and the number of jobs that will be offered to high school students.

- Acting President Leerhsen responded that during the summer of 2025 there were approximately 200 students and that is the floor – not the ceiling of the agency's capacity.

Director Eaddy also asked for details about the focus and the intended audience for the new CTA Podcast?

- Acting President Leerhsen responded that the first foci is on the employees of the agency and their experiences. She further responded that the podcast is in the public domain and they at a later date it will bring on stakeholders, riders and talk about transit more broadly.

**MINUTES:** Chairman Barclay asked for a motion to approve the regular Board meeting minutes from March 12, 2025. After being moved by Director Jha and seconded by Director Ortiz, the minutes were approved with six (6) votes by roll call.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

CTA's General Counsel Kent Ray explained that there would be an Executive Session pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, Article 2C, Sections 1, and 11. Director Jha moved that the Board go into Executive Session and Director Ortiz seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote. The Board went into Executive Session at 11:29 a.m.

At approximately 12:34 p.m. the Board returned from Executive Session.

Chairman Barclay requested a motion to return to open session, which was moved by Director Jha and seconded by Director Ortiz. The motion passed unanimously following a roll call vote.

**AGENDA ITEM 5(A) - CLOSED SESSION MINUTES APPROVAL:** It was moved by Director Requejo and seconded by Director Lee that the Board approve the closed session minutes from March 12, 2025. The motion passed with six (6) votes in the affirmative.

**AGENDA ITEM 5(B) – ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT:** The Chair entertained a motion to approve an ordinance authorizing the execution of a collective bargaining agreement containing terms of tentative agreements with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, District Number 9. It was moved by Director Jha and seconded by Director Ortiz. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

**BOARD MATTERS:** Chairman Barclay asked whether there were any Board Matters? Secretary Greenlee responded that there were no Board Matters.

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, AUDIT AND BUDGET:** The Finance, Audit, and Budget Committee report was presented by Director Bernard Jakes. The committee reviewed the monthly finance report and approved the March 12, 2025, FAB committee meeting minutes. Director Jakes stated that all Committee agenda items, listed on the Board agenda, were presented, reviewed,

discussed, and recommended by the Committee, for Board approval. Director Jakes stated that all the approved committee items, 3 ordinances and 6 contracts, were placed on the omnibus for approval by the Board. Director Jakes concluded the Finance, Audit and Budget Committee report.

Director Jha moved that the omnibus be approved, and the motion was seconded by Director Ortiz. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

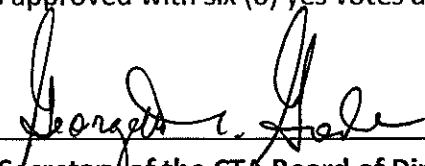
All approved April 9, 2025, Board ordinances are available online, at [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com), "Chicago Transit Board", "Board Ordinances", Ordinance numbers 025-38 through 025-45.

CONSTRUCTION REPORT: Director Jha moved that the Construction Report be deferred to the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Director Ortiz. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

NEW BUSINESS: There was no New Business.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chairperson Barclay asked for a motion to adjourn the April 9, 2025, Chicago Transit Board meeting. After being moved by Director Jha and seconded by Director Ortiz, the motion was approved with six (6) yes votes and the meeting was adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

APPROVED:

  
Secretary of the CTA Board of Directors

Date:

