CTA ADA Advisory Committee Meeting Notes
Monday, January 12, 2026
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Members Present
Committee Chair: Laura Saltzman (in person)
Committee Members:

- Cynthia Fosco (in person)
- Sara Luna (in person)
- Barbara Padilla (in person)
- Dr. Delphine Labbé (in person)
- Milton Lash (in person)
- Johnny Gonzalez (via Zoom)
- Giselle Núñez (late, via zoom)
- Sandra Fernandez (absent)
- Zoe Lanier (excused absence)
- Jada Thompson (absent)

CTA Facilitator: Irma Gomez-Fierro, Manager, ADA Compliance Programs
CTA Staff:

- Elsa Gutierrez, Vice President, Scheduling and Service Planning
- Molly E. Poppe, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer

Roll Call

Meeting called to order at 1:33 p.m. A motion was made and approved to admit remote participants Johnny Gonzalez and Giselle Núñez for voting purposes. Committee achieved a quorum.

Announcements

No disability-related announcements were shared.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The October 6, 2025 meeting minutes were distributed to members prior to the meeting for review. No changes were proposed. Barbara Padilla moved to approve the minutes; Dr. Delphine Labbé seconded. Motion passed.

Public Comments

No public comments were submitted.

Construction Updates

Presented by Bill Mooney, Chief Infrastructure Officer, CTA

Mr. Mooney provided an overview of the All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP), organized into projects currently under construction and projects in design.

Under Construction:

- Red-Purple Modernization (RPM) Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, and Bryn Mawr stations are complete. Signal installation near Howard is ongoing and expected to be completed in the coming months, marking the final major piece of core RPM construction. Benches at all four RPM stations were replaced in December 2025 following customer feedback that the original benches were slippery and poorly

designed. The replacement benches are like those at 95th Street and Washington/Wabash and to what was originally envisioned for the stations.

- Austin Station ASAP — Elevator shaft construction is underway. The Mason Avenue entrance is currently serving as the operating entrance/exit. The new accessible Austin Avenue entrance is under construction and expected to open in late spring 2026, at which point it will become the permanent entrance/exit, with Mason remaining open as an auxiliary access point.
- Racine Station ASAP — The new main station house on Racine Avenue opened in October 2025 with a new elevator, new stairs, and a platform extension. Work continues at the Loomis Street entrance, where a historically preserved ADA-sloped ramp is being constructed. When complete, the station will have two accessible entrances, providing redundancy.
- Western Station (Brown Line) Though not formally an ASAP station, this project falls under the ASAP elevator rehab program and is being executed using the Progressive Design-Build delivery method — CTA's first use of this procurement model. The station is receiving full brick facade reconstruction, two modernized elevators, interior upgrades including new flooring and a new Customer Assistant booth, an electrical upgrade, and a fully reconstructed accessible bus turnaround with sloped loading platforms and ADA curb cuts. Completion is anticipated in late spring or early summer 2026.
- State and Lake Loop Station — The existing 130-year-old station closed January 6, 2026, for a three-year reconstruction led by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT). The new station will feature wider platforms, new elevators, full ADA accessibility, a glass canopy, and improved lighting. Scheduled to open in 2029.

Under Design:

- California ASAP — Design complete; construction bid expected shortly.
- Montrose Blue Line — Design ongoing.
- 16-Elevator Rehabilitation Program — Ongoing systemwide; focuses on highest-use and highest-wear elevators, including Clark and Lake, O'Hare, and Midway.
- Belmont and Irving Park — Design beginning.
- Pulaski (Blue Line), Oak Park (Green Line), and Ridgeland (Green Line) In planning; working through national environmental and state historical preservation processes.
- 43rd Street (Green Line) Customer-facing project with structural, electrical, stair, and elevator improvements; groundbreaking anticipated in coming months.

Questions and Discussion:

- Milton Lash asked whether the 16-elevator rehab program is systemwide or limited to active construction projects. Mr. Mooney confirmed it is systemwide and distinct from elevator work occurring at other station reconstruction projects.
- Dr. Labbé asked about the Austin Station entrance status. Mr. Mooney confirmed the Mason entrance/exit is open and functional, and that the Austin Avenue side will become the permanent accessible entrance at project completion.
- Chairperson Saltzman asked about elevator standardization and whether rehab projects would reduce the diversity of elevator manufacturers. Mr. Mooney explained that competitive procurement law prevents sole-sourcing a specific manufacturer. The primary challenge is parts obsolescence for aging units, even from manufacturers still in business. Additionally, rehab projects frequently trigger cascading code upgrades to electrical rooms, fire systems, and power capacity due to the substantially increased power demands of modern elevator equipment.

Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS)

Presented by David Miller, Chief Highway Engineer, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT)

Mr. Miller presented on CDOT's expanded APS program, which is in Year 1 of implementation following the finalization of a court-ordered APS remedial plan in May 2025.

Program Overview:

- APS devices provide non-visual cues — audible tones, speech messages, and vibrotactile surfaces — to communicate walk/don't walk signal status at signalized intersections.
- In Chicago, most signalized intersections are pre-timed, meaning pedestrians do not need to press a push button to receive the walk phase. A small number of pedestrian-actuated intersections require button activation.
- There are approximately 2,800 signalized intersections in Chicago. Phase 1 (Years 1–10) will retrofit 71% with APS push buttons. All remaining intersections will be retrofitted in the following five years.
- Year 1 goal: 70 intersections retrofitted.

Prioritization:

- Public requests are the highest priority for retrofitting existing intersections. Requests can be submitted via www.chicagoaps.org, the 3-1-1 system (phone or app), in person at any aldermanic office, or at the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. Submitters should be prepared to provide cross-street names and any relevant context.
- Additional prioritization criteria include intersections with exclusive pedestrian phases, midblock crossings (including several at CTA rail stations such as UIC-Halsted Blue Line and Sox-35th Red Line), T-shaped intersections, complex geometries (e.g., diagonal street intersections), leading pedestrian intervals, protected turn phases, and locations near public transit, hospitals, government buildings, and libraries.

Oversight and Community Involvement:

- A Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist and an independent monitor are supporting CDOT's implementation.
- An APS Community Advisory Committee held its first meeting in November 2025. CDOT and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities co-lead the committee.
- Program website: www.chicagoaps.org | Email: CDOTAPS@cityofchicago.org

Questions and Discussion:

- Cynthia Fosco asked about APS prioritization for the Southport and Grace Street intersection, which will be part of a planned bike Greenway. Mr. Miller encouraged a formal public request and noted that the complex geometry of that intersection may independently qualify it for prioritization.
- Sara Luna asked whether APS units include a long-press feature to announce intersection names, as she had experienced in Minneapolis. Mr. Miller confirmed that this optional feature is under consideration. It is not a federal requirement but has been raised through the APS advisory committee.
- Ms. Luna also noted that Minneapolis APS signs displayed large-print and Braille cross-street names, which she found helpful.
- Cynthia Fosco asked about reporting APS volume issues (too quiet or too loud). Mr. Miller confirmed that 3-1-1 reports are appropriate for both issues.
- Dr. Labbé raised concerns about push button placement not aligning with the associated crosswalk and curb ramp at one location near the Lighthouse. Mr. Miller acknowledged push button alignment with the crossing direction as a key design criterion and encouraged 3-1-1 reporting for misaligned or shifted units.
- Milton Lash raised the issue of insufficient pedestrian crossing time at wide or complex intersections, particularly near hospitals such as University of Chicago Medical Center. Mr. Lash suggested that APS usage data could help pinpoint intersections needing timing adjustments. Mr. Miller confirmed CDOT reanalyzes crossing timing upon request, noted that current designs use updated slower pedestrian crossing speed standards, and agreed to bring the question of crossing time adequacy near accessible facilities to CDOT's traffic engineers.
- Ms. Luna asked about audible countdown timers. Mr. Miller confirmed that visual countdowns are added to all upgraded pedestrian signals and that audible countdowns are an optional feature the program is exploring.

- Chairperson Saltzman encouraged CDOT to pursue optional features that go beyond federal minimum standards. She also asked about CTA-CDOT coordination on APS near bus stops. Ms. Gomez-Fierro confirmed that coordination is ongoing through the APS advisory committee, and Ms. Poppe noted that CTA participates in the Office of Underground Coordination to review APS installations both during planning and before implementation. CTA is also updating its Bus Facilities Handbook in partnership with CDOT.

Bus Stop Accessibility Improvements

Presented by Quentin Shipley-Mellon, Traffic Planner, CTA

Mr. Shipley-Mellon presented on CTA's Bus Stop Improvement Program, which aims to make bus stops accessible for ramp deployment and improve the boarding experience for all riders.

Defining an Accessible Bus Stop:

CTA Traffic Planning categorizes bus stop accessibility into three conditions:

- Full Access — adequate concrete landing area properly connected to the sidewalk and suitable for ramp deployment.
- Unpaved — grassy area or insufficient concrete at the boarding zone.
- Uneven or Narrow — slope too steep, width insufficient, or a physical disconnect preventing safe ramp deployment.

The minimum clearance standard is a 5' x 8' concrete landing area, per the CTA Bus Facilities Handbook.

Program Scope and Process:

- The program targets stop not already addressed through city roadway projects such as arterial resurfacing or Streetscapes. It is bond-funded through the City of Chicago's C*NECT program at approximately $1 million per year.
- Stops are selected using a data-driven approach incorporating the City's MOBEC (Mobility and Socioeconomic) Index, bus ridership, ramp deployment data, Ventra disability and senior fare usage, and proximity to hospitals. The program initially targeted community areas such as Chatham and Douglas and has expanded outward to other high-need neighborhoods.
- Since summer 2021, CTA has reduced the number of inaccessible bus stops in Chicago by ~300. In 2025 alone, approximately 115 stops were upgraded through this program.
- Process: CTA submits a candidate stop list to CDOT → CDOT surveys and designs → contractor completes construction → CTA verifies, updates data records, and repositions bus stop signage.
- Stops that cannot be addressed through this program (e.g., those requiring full curb/sidewalk reconstruction, extreme slopes, or double-height sidewalks) are documented and may be escalated to larger infrastructure projects.

Future Priorities:

- The 2026 program iteration will focus on stops shared between CTA and Pace, supporting regional mobility for riders who may use whichever bus arrives first on shared corridors such as South Halsted Street.
- CTA Traffic Planning also oversees the tactile bus stop signage rollout, e-paper real-time arrival signs with audible components, and the updated Bus Facilities Handbook being developed in partnership with CDOT.

Questions and Discussion:

- Barbara Padilla asked whether bus stops at rail station terminals can be relocated rather than rebuilt in place. Mr. Shipley-Mellon confirmed that relocation is considered within the program, though terminal locations are particularly challenging given the need to maintain proximity to train station access.

- Cynthia Fosco asked whether a professional is reviewing Braille accuracy on the new tactile signs. Mr. Shipley-Mellon confirmed that proofreading expertise will be engaged and that he is working with Ms. Gomez-Fierro to identify a qualified reviewer.
- Dr. Labbé raised concerns about ramp deployment at bus stops adjacent to protected bike lanes. Mr. Shipley-Mellon described two configurations: bus boarding islands (raised, with the bike lane at street level and a crossing) and shared bus bulbs (where the bike lane passes through the stop area). Jeremy Safran added that bus boarding islands are being built at 8 feet of width to prevent conflicts between ramp deployment and bike traffic. He confirmed that guidance in the updated Bus Facilities Handbook will address this.
- Chairperson Saltzman expressed concern about newly designed configurations where ramp deployment occurs directly into a bike lane, noting she has not encountered any wheelchair users or cyclists comfortable with the arrangement. She urged that the updated Bus Facilities Handbook explicitly discourage such designs.

Bus Priority Corridor Study Project

Presented by Jason Meter, Senior Manager, Bus Strategic Planning, and Jason Wald, Strategic Planner, CTA

Mr. Meter presented on the Bus Priority Corridor Study, a major next step in implementing the Better Streets for Buses Plan — a citywide framework developed by CTA and CDOT to improve bus speed, reliability, and rider experience through street-level infrastructure improvements.

Project Overview:

- In 2024, CTA provided more than 180 million bus rides. One standard bus can carry approximately 50 or more passengers in the space of 2 cars, yet buses are frequently slowed by traffic congestion. The study examines how to make bus travel faster, more convenient, and more comfortable.
- Five corridors were selected from the 17-corridor Better Streets for Buses network for in-depth study:
  - Pulaski Road (Peterson to 87th Street) Routes 53 and 53A
  - Fullerton Avenue (Grand/Nordica to Halsted) Route 74
  - Western Avenue (Howard to 79th Street) Routes 49, X49, and 49B
  - 55th Street/Garfield Boulevard (Cicero to South Hyde Park) Route 55
  - Cottage Grove Avenue (35th to 115th Street) Routes 4, X4, and 115
- Together, these five corridors serve 80,000 daily bus rides. They were selected based on geographic diversity, ridership, and public support.

Potential Improvements Under Consideration:

- Bus lanes (curb-running, offset, and center-running)
- Sidewalk and crosswalk improvements for safer, more accessible access
- Traffic signal upgrades to reduce bus delays
- Upgraded bus stop amenities including shelters, seating, and bus boarding stations with raised platforms, snow melt systems, and wayfinding
- Bus boarding islands and bulbs that allow buses to serve passengers without merging in and out of traffic

Design Concepts:

Design alternatives were developed based on curb-to-curb street width. For 70-foot-wide streets, four options are being evaluated:

- Option 1: Center-running bus lanes with bus boarding islands at major intersections. Maximizes speed and reliability; requires some turn restrictions and modest parking reduction.
- Option 2: Center-running bus lanes with median boarding islands at minor intersections. Strong speed benefits; larger impact on street parking and some left turns.
- Option 3: Continuous offset bus lanes with curb bump outs at bus stops. Retains most parking and turning access, moderate speed improvement.

- Option 4: Continuous curb-running bus lane. Removes most street parking; no change to general traffic lanes; limits bus stop amenity expansion.

For narrower 56-foot streets, an offset bus lane with curb bump outs is the primary viable option.

Community Engagement:

- Round 1 of three planned rounds of public outreach is underway. Three in-person meetings were held (Gage Park; Avondale/Logan Square; Washington Park), along with a virtual public meeting and smaller sessions with community organizations and aldermanic offices.
- Key themes from community input: pedestrian safety is a top priority; riders place high value on speed, reliability, and comfort while waiting (particularly shelters and seating); local businesses have expressed concerns about parking impacts.
- Refined design concepts reflecting Round 1 feedback will be presented in mid-2026. Final recommendations are planned for December 2026.
- An online Menti survey is available for additional input. The committee was encouraged to participate and share the link within their networks.
- Project website: transitchicago.com/betterstreetsforbuses/#corridor | Email: betterstreetsforbuses@transitchicago.com | Phone: 1-888-YOUR-CTA

Questions and Discussion:

- Dr. Labbé asked about the relationship between this study and transit signal priority (TSP). Mr. Meter confirmed that TSP is already operational at all Western Avenue intersections and that this study's recommendations will complement existing investments. On corridors without TSP, such as Pulaski, TSP may be among the recommendations.
- Dr. Labbé stated bus operators were not consistently pulling to the curb. Mr. Meter acknowledged that bus bulbs and boarding islands function as self-enforcing infrastructure. He acknowledged that driver training and illegally parked vehicles in bus stop zones also contribute to the problem.
- Milton Lash asked for feedback on the existing 55th Street corridor between Kenwood and Cottage Grove, where protected bike lanes separate parking from the bus lane. Mr. Meter noted the study is collecting community input on options including separated bus boarding islands, shared bus/bike lanes along the curb, or other configurations. Analysis is still in progress.
- Cynthia Fosco asked why Ashland is not among the five selected corridors. Mr. Meter confirmed Ashland remains on the 17-corridor list but was not selected for this phase due to geographic overlap with Western Avenue.
- Chairperson Saltzman encouraged committee members with disabilities to engage in the survey, particularly around the tradeoffs of center-running bus lanes and the range of amenity options.

Wayfinding Subcommittee Report

Presented by Dr. Delphine Labbé, Subcommittee Chair

The subcommittee compared AI-generated audio announcements with actor-recorded announcements in the existing CTA voice. Committee noted the AI-generated voice was noted as slightly too fast and lacking natural pauses.

Other meeting topics:

- Trains not announcing their line at stations serving multiple routes
- Door opening location signage and tactile pavers indicating where to stand on platforms
- Signage and orientation aids for accessibility features within stations
- Adding accessibility feature feedback options to the CTA chatbot
- Technology solutions as accessibility aids, including Be My Eyes, Aira, and Good Maps

Facilitator's Report

Presented by Irma Gomez-Fierro, ADA Compliance Programs

- **2025 Outreach:** 69 disability trainings, 10 bus familiarization training courses, and 25 community events delivered to frontline employees and the public.
- **ADA Ridership:** Disabled fare rides at 46 percent of pre-pandemic levels. Following RAP/TAP changes making fixed-route transit free for paratransit-eligible riders, reduced paratransit fixed-route ridership rose to 84 percent of pre-pandemic levels in December 2025 up from a historical average of ~54 percent — with average weekday rides reaching 2,046 for the week ending December 27, a 40 percent week-over-week increase.
- **Infrastructure:** Racine Blue Line Station house was completed in October 2025 (new elevator, stairs, and platform extension). State and Lake Loop Station closed January 6, 2026, for three-year reconstruction; new station opens 2029. RPM station benches replaced at Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, and Bryn Mawr following rider feedback.
- **Service:** 2025 Frequent Network added Routes 9 (Ashland), 12 (Roosevelt), 72 (North), and 81 (Lawrence); 70 percent of CTA's service area now within half a mile of frequent service. Bus Vision Project community engagement upcoming.
- **Facilities (Refresh and Renew):** ~$6.5 million invested at 44 bus turnarounds and rail stations since spring 2025, including tactile warning strips, updated signage, and improved lighting. 17 e-paper signs with audio real-time arrivals installed: tactile bus stop sign pilot with route/direction information ongoing.

Old Business

No old business was raised.

New Business

Topics proposed for future agendas:

- Bus interior design: Dr. Labbé raised concerns about limited maneuvering space when wheelchairs, walker, or stroller users are aboard, citing Montréal as a better model. Chairperson Saltzman noted newer electric buses prevent two power chair users from boarding simultaneously.
- Chairperson Saltzman requested a future presentation on accessibility planning amid regional transit system changes. She encouraged CTA to use this committee as a first forum for flagging concerns.

Adjournment

Next scheduled meeting dates:

- Monday, April 13, 2026
- Monday, July 13, 2026
- Monday, October 5, 2026

Sara Luna moved to adjourn; Barbara Padilla seconded. Approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 3:53 p.m.