



**President Rodriguez's Remarks
at May 2010 Regular Meeting of Chicago Transit Board**

May 14, 2010

Good Morning Chairman Peterson and members of the Board.

I would like to start with Springfield matters. First, the good news. The bill for RTA's request to increase its borrowing authority was approved and the Governor has indicated a willingness to sign. As you know, the state's cash crunch has slowed its payments to the RTA. This will help with the RTA's cash flow and should help CTA as well. We count on receiving the right levels of public funding from the RTA; and as you've seen in the financial reports, we've been carefully, and successfully, managing our costs all year.

There were some reports last week of a bill that would scale back the free rides for senior program by raising the income level for eligible participants. That bill only passed the Senate. It is not the same bill that moved through the House, consequently, the matter remains unresolved. Additionally, there has been considerable speculation about how much this bill would save transit systems – I've seen reports that suggest amounts in excess of \$35 million. The reality is that the data collected by RTA does not describe income level.

We don't have any way of accurately predicting the number of seniors who participate in the free ride program who meet the financial thresholds contemplated in the bill. There is no basis on which to determine how many free riders would be impacted if this bill passes. The income levels in the bill are high enough that it is fair to assume many seniors would still be able to avail themselves of the program. So those who think this will provide a significant savings for transit agencies are probably overly optimistic.

Last month I reported on sustainability. I have one important update. CTA has joined The Climate Registry, a non-profit group that sets standards for calculating greenhouse gas emissions and provides public information on efforts to achieve those standards.

Public transportation is inherently friendly to the environment but CTA emphasizes its efforts to be conscious of how our operations impact the environment. This registry is another way to refine our efforts. It also enhances transparency, providing access to information available to interested parties.

As a result of joining The Climate Registry, the CTA will begin quantifying and verifying greenhouse gas emissions. The aim is to increase operational efficiency, identify greenhouse gas risks, prepare for emerging federal regulations and participate in policy discussions relevant to public transportation.

Testing of the 5000-series rail car prototypes continues on the Red Line and is going well. There haven't been any issues that have significantly impacted service for riders.

The rail car prototypes are scheduled to conclude testing on the Red Line and begin testing on the Green Line next week.

The National Transportation Safety Board recently recommended that all transit agencies conduct additional inspections of signaling systems.

During these inspections, CTA personnel discovered a **potential** defect with a component of the Orange Line's signaling system.

I want to emphasize that there had been no previous signal problems and the Orange Line has been safely and reliably serving CTA customers for 16 years. In addition, the chances of such an event actually occurring are extremely unlikely. There are a number of other systems, redundant systems, complimented by rigid procedures designed to prevent a defect from occurring much less the chance that a potential defect could pose a risk to our customers.

Safety is of the highest concern. We implemented mandatory slow zones when necessary and in this instance the impact to customers has been an extra few minutes added to their trips. Our engineers are working with the signal manufacturer on a solution and we will work to eliminate this inconvenience as quickly as possible.

In the spirit of recognizing our employees' efforts, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the awareness and diligence of CTA's Safety and Power & Way personnel in uncovering this potential problem.

Last month we were honored to welcome Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood here at 567. The Transportation Department's office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization was hosting a workshop for DBE's and small businesses and asked to hold it here.

We strongly support the Department's efforts to connect businesses with opportunities. Having a successful working relationship with vendors and contractors is an important component in providing quality public transportation. As the board well knows, we are extremely committed to fostering the growth of DBE firms among those doing business with the CTA.

CTA's DBE program helps level the playing field so that good businesses can prosper and grow and we were pleased to have the opportunity to work with our federal partners to encourage greater DBE participation.

Finally, I would like to let the Board know that I have been invited to speak to the City Club of Chicago next week.

The CTA received a lot of attention as a consequence of the difficult decisions we have made in the past months. Even in the toughest of times, it is possible to pursue goals, manage efficiently and work with available resources to move forward.

I am excited for the opportunity and appreciative of the forum. It is my intention to address the significant achievements of the past year, despite our financial challenges, and how we will position this agency for the future. I hope you will be able to attend.

Thank you, and this concludes my report.