Rebuilding the Forest Park Branch of the Blue Line

Community meeting

Oct. 29, 2026



cta

FOREST PARK BRANCH REBUILD

68 years ago…





Originally called the Congress Line, the Forest Park Branch opened in 1958.

It is now beyond its useful life and needs reconstruction.



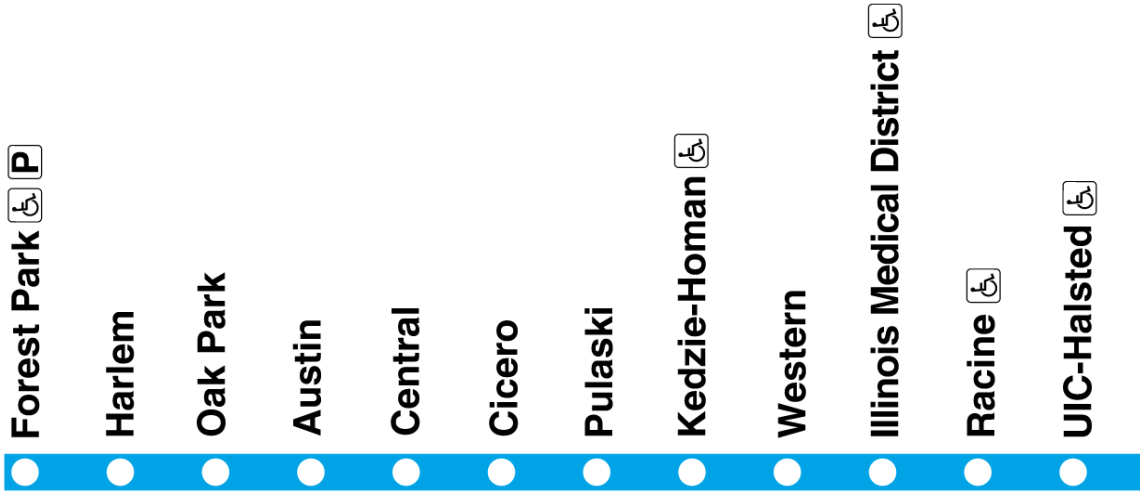


The Forest Park Branch program

- Opened in 1958 as part of the I-290 corridor
- Approximately 18 miles of track
  - Subway to Forest Park terminal
- 11 active passenger stations
  - 3 closed stations
- 4 power substations
- Interfaces with more than 30 bridges
  - Illinois Dept. of Transportation (IDOT), Chicago Dept. of Transportation (CDOT) and pedestrian bridges



Program goals



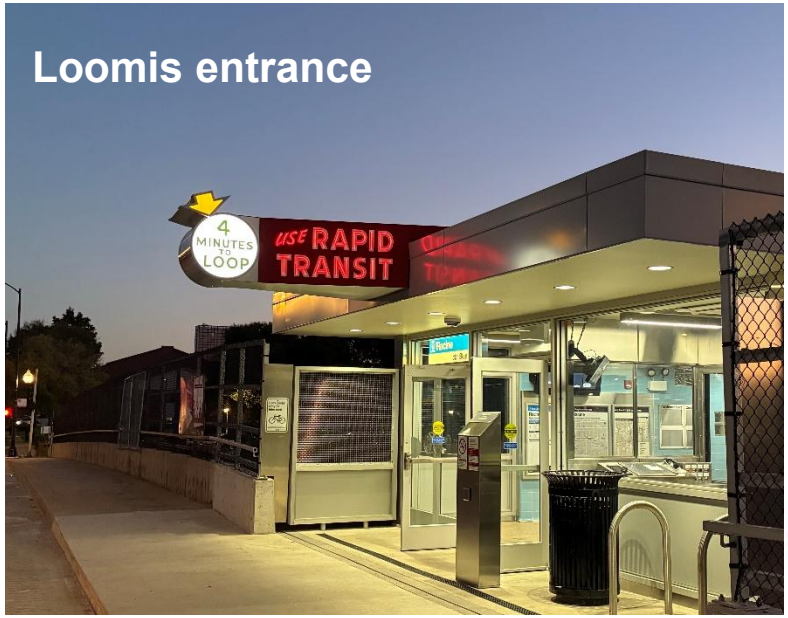
As part of this project, CTA plans to:

- Systematically eliminate slow zones from Forest Park terminal to IMD Station in multiple phases.
  - Removing 8 miles of slow zones
- Rebuild, modernize, and bring full accessibility to six stations on the corridor
  - Includes reopening of Central Station
- Make meaningful progress in partnership with IDOT work including bridges, roadwork, and other drainage improvements.

Work completed so far

- Approximately 15,000 track feet have been rebuilt
- Racine station and Loomis have been reopened
- Morgan substation to be complete in early 2027
- Designs underway
  - Pulaski station
  - Full track design starting Q1 2027





Forest Park Modernization: Phased construction



Rebuilding 70-year-old stations and track

CTA to rebuild stations:

- Racine: *Done*
- Pulaski: *Planned 2028-2030*

Station work planned, pending funding

- Central: *2029-2030*
- Kedzie/Homan: *2029-2031*
- Cicero: *2029-2031*
- Forest Park: *2031 - 2032*
- Western: *2031-2035*

IL Dept. of Transportation to rebuild stations:

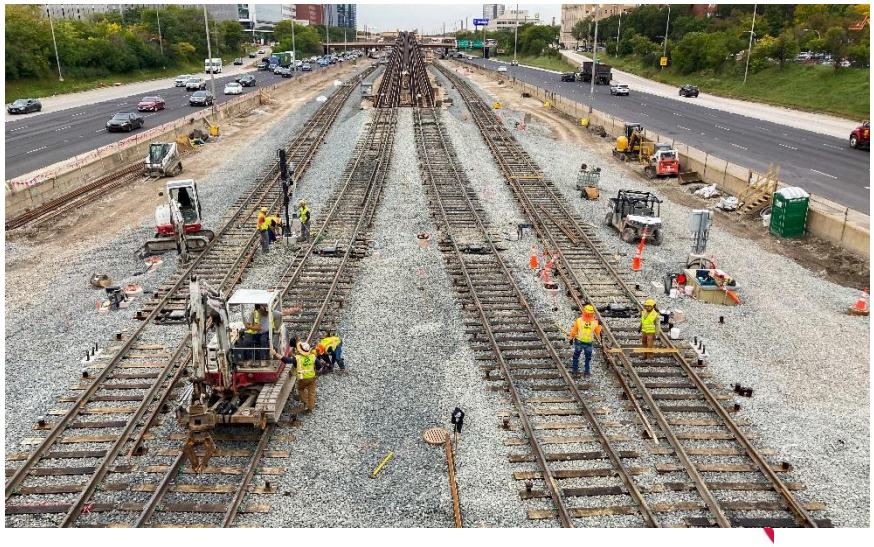
- Austin
- Oak Park
- Harlem

CTA to rebuild tracks in multiple phases

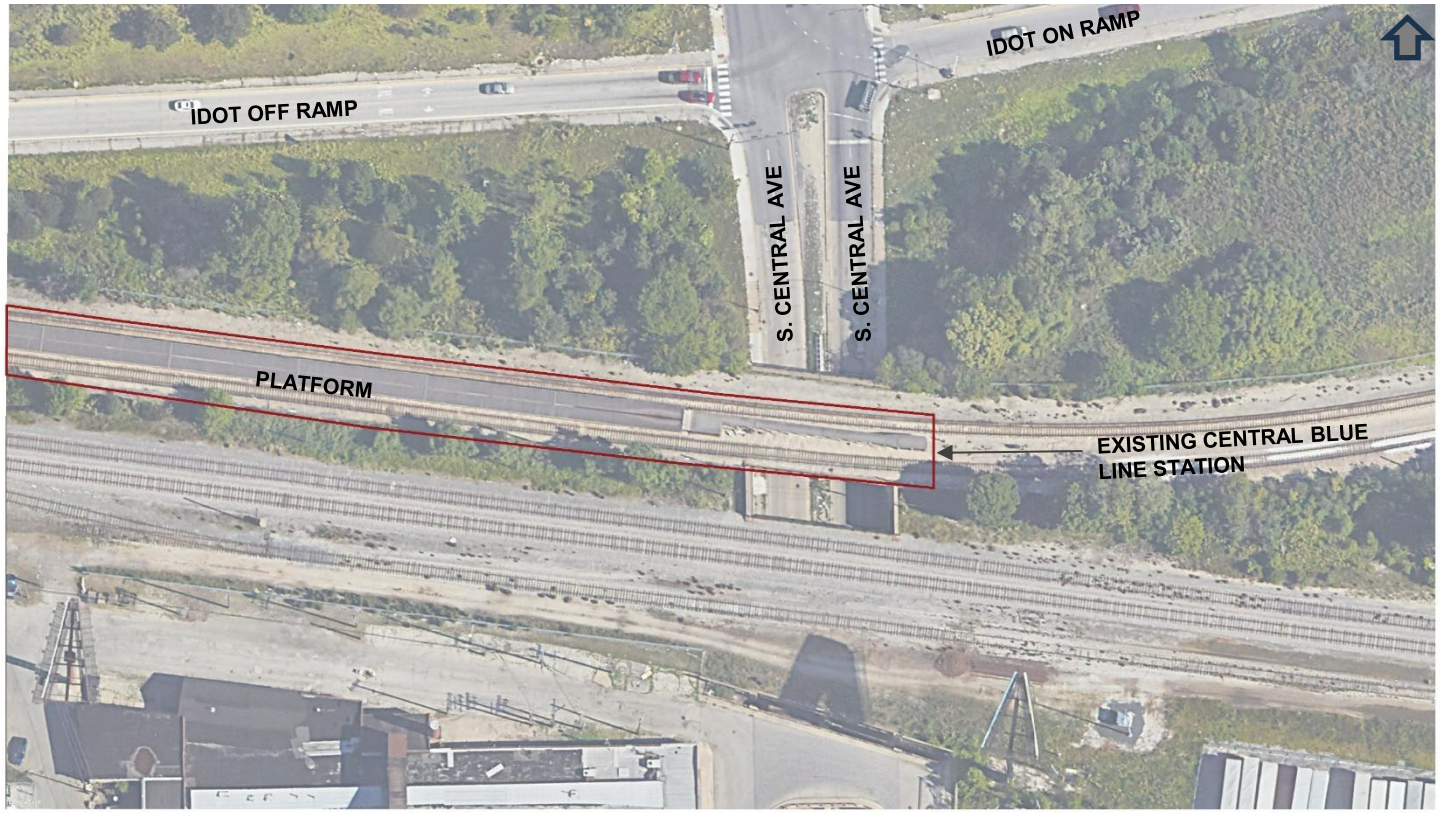
- IMD to LaSalle – *Done*
- Pulaski to Kedzie – *Planned 2027*

Future phases, pending funding

- Kedzie to IMD –*2028*
- Cicero to Pulaski –*2029*
- Central to Cicero –*2030*
- I-290 bridge to Central –*2031*



Reopening Central station



Aerial plan

Located in the **Austin neighborhood** on Chicago's West Side at **801 S. Central Avenue**, the Central station served the Forest Park Branch until it was closed in 1973.

The station featured street-level entrances integrated into the concrete embankment/viaduct walls on both sides of Central Avenue. Passengers entered through these openings and ascended stairs directly to the platform fare control area.

Project purpose and timeline

Project Purpose

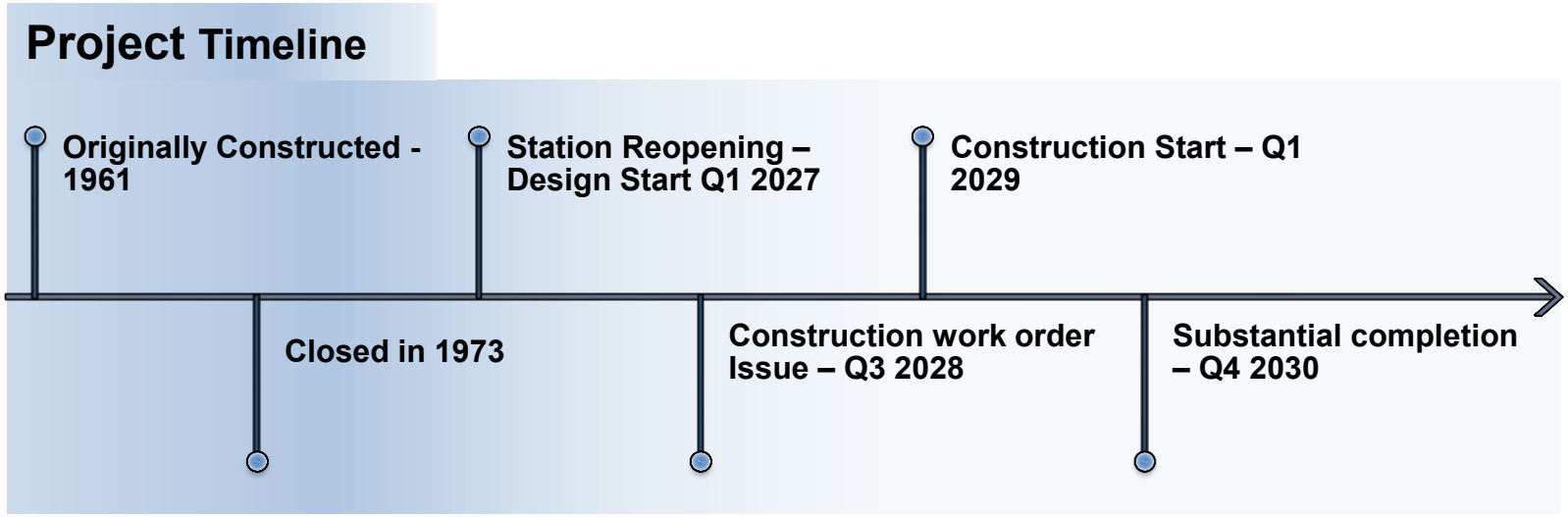
- Restore connectivity by reopening the Central station and closing the **1.5-mile station gap** between Austin and Cicero
- Improve access to the Austin community with stronger bus-to-rail connections
- Deliver a **fully ADA-accessible** station and enhance the customer experience with new stationhouse, improved lighting, wayfinding, security, and other amenities

Project Schedule

- Station is required to be reopened by January 1, 2031, per the state's NITA legislation
- Coordination with IDOT adjacent sewer interceptor construction and historic coordination / approvals

Project Cost

- $140M dollar total cost estimate for administration, design, and construction



Central station reopening concept



Project scope: Construct a **new, fully accessible station**, including:

- New stationhouse, signage, and lighting
- Elevator and stairs
- Supporting station infrastructure

Cicero and Kedzie-Homan stations

Project Purpose

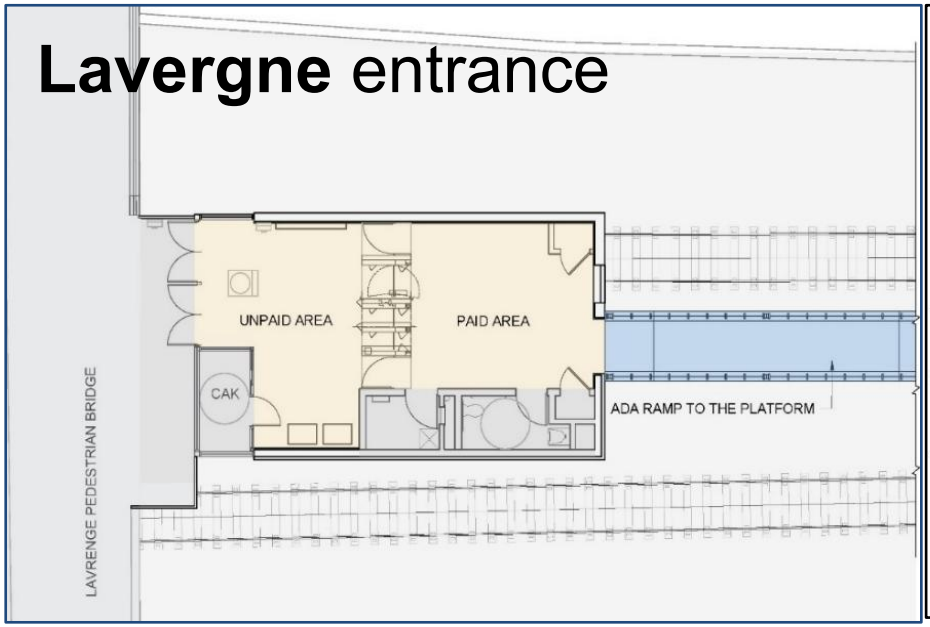
- Will design and reconstruct both stations for ADA accessibility
- Both are similar in design plan with an elevator added to the main entrance (Cicero and Kedzie) and a new ramp from the auxiliary entrances (Lavergne and Homan)

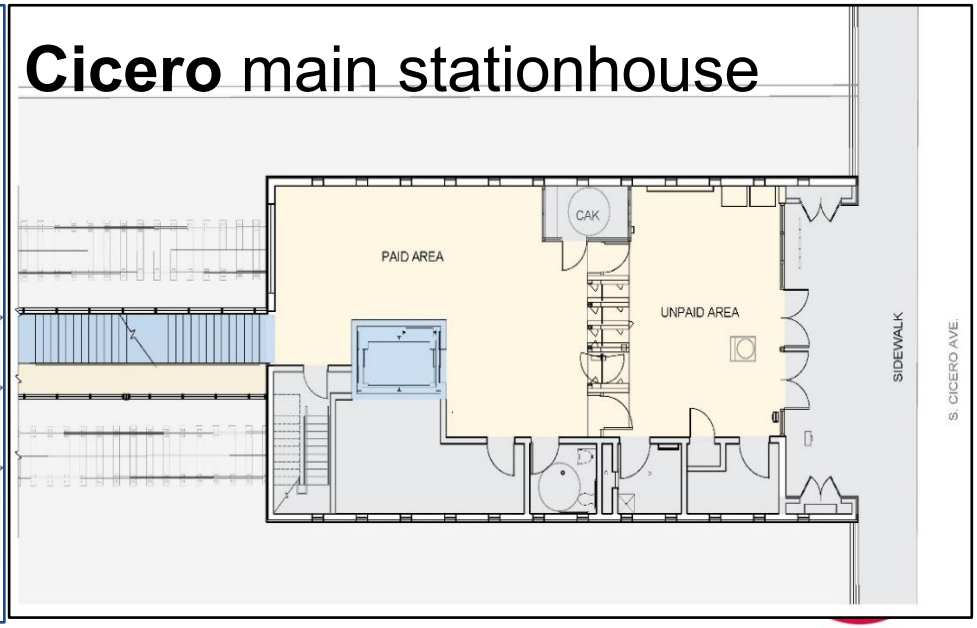
Project Schedule

- Lavergne entrance of the Cicero station is required to be reopened by January 1, 2031, by the state's NITA legislation. Cicero entrance to start immediately after Lavergne reopens.
- Coordination with IDOT bridge construction and historic coordination / approvals

Project Cost

- $192 million total cost estimate for administration, design, and construction for both stations





Public involvement

- Actively pursuing a Community Outreach Office
- Currently working on establishing the PAC (Project Advisory Committee)
- Looking for important community stakeholders
- Have commitments from:
  - 24th Ward Alderperson Monique Scott
  - 27th Ward Alderperson Walter Burnett Jr.
  - 28th Ward Alderperson Jason Ervin
- Community outreach events to be planned for 2027

Thank you!

- Forest Park
- Harlem
- Oak Park
- Austin
- Central
- Cicero
- Pulaski
- Kedzie-Homan
- Western
- Illinois Medical District
- Racine
- UIC-Halsted