

CTA Innovation Studio – Fare Gates of the Future Problem Statement Questions & Responses

Some questions have been edited for clarity. To reduce repetitive responses, similar questions have been consolidated.

- 1. Is a draft professional services agreement available for review, including anticipated insurance, indemnification, intellectual-property, warranty and equipment-removal requirements?**

A professional services agreement will be drafted once CTA selects a vendor for the pilot and will be unique to the project.

- 1. For the PSA for the pilot, will there be a requirement for DBE/MBE/WBE participation?**

While CTA encourages participation from DBE/MBE/WBE, there is not a requirement.

- 2. Will this pilot and the next scaled long-term solutions, including any domestic-content, manufacturing or final-assembly requirements be applied under the Build America, Buy America Act (BABA)?**

Buy America requirements do not apply to Innovation Studio pilots. Future procurements of a long-term solution must be BABA compliant if the program utilizes Federal funds.

- 3. Do the overall costs for the pilot and long-term solutions need to include any taxes?**

CTA is a tax-exempt entity so costs should not include taxes.

- 4. Who will have the property rights to the removed equipment at the end of the pilot if the selected vendor gets compensation for the pilot?**

CTA is open to loaning equipment from vendors during the pilot that would be returned once the pilot concludes. This will be determined by both parties and documented in the Professional Services Agreement.

- 5. During the video conference, we believe mention was made of “push pounds” force with regard to ADA gates. Can CTA provide a reference to its current ADA guidelines?**

Under ADA/ABA accessibility guidelines, gates and doors along an accessible route generally can’t require more than 5 pounds.

- 6. During the video presentation, CTA mentioned IP ratings in reference to environmental and weather conditions at stations. Can CTA please provide a list of technical standards that it expects new faregates to meet?**

A new faregate should meet IP54/IP65 or better.

- 7. In the session on July 30, 2026, CTA described it as follows: “Allow a rider to validate and enter the system in 0.5 second or less” Does this mean the existing faregate opens the door within 0.5 second or less? Or anticipation for the pilot? Please provide the transaction processing time of the existing Ventra reader.**

A general range of 0.5 seconds is optimal; however, CTA would like this threshold to be programmable/configurable.

- 8. For the sake of clarity and consistency in submitting piloting costs, can CTA please provide additional information on funding limitations and guidelines for shared costs over the pilot between pilot participant and CTA?**

Project costs and funding requests should be provided on the application. Funding will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The Innovation Studio program is more likely to be able to cover costs associated with software, software integration and/or hardware as opposed to labor or project management.

- 9. How will CTA determine which station is assigned to successful applicants? Is it acceptable for an applicant to submit specific requests for a preferred location or specific gate-array configuration?**

Yes, applicants can request specific stations from the list provided [here](#), but it is not required. Applicants who are selected for a Phase 2 presentation will be provided with instructions to identify preferences for stations to pilot their solution, including a top choice and two backup options. Final pilot locations will be determined in coordination with the CTA for selected applicants.

- 10. CTA specified that pilots at the eleven listed stations would be at the main station entrance? Can CTA please share the total number of entrances at each of the pilot stations?**

The fare gates or entry technology will be installed at all main entrances where CTA staff are present.

- 11. In photos (see Slide 16) it appears that CTA has service/emergency exit gates in addition to regular and ADA gates. Is it CTA’s intension to keep service/emergency exit gates or is it expected that they be replaced with new gates at pilot stations?**

Emergency gates will stay in place during the pilot.

- 12. Are there new CTA ADA gates installed at all eleven pilot stations?**

Some of the pilot stations have ADA gates installed.

- 13. Does CTA anticipate one-for-one, in-kind replacement of gates in order to maintain the same number of aisles at pilot stations?**

Yes

- 14. Does CTA anticipate having the faregates equipped to require “tap-out” on exiting?**

No

- 15. Can CTA describe the civil construction, technical, and other support that it would provide in implementing the pilot?**

CTA will provide subject matter experts and personnel to support throughout the duration of the pilot.

- 16. Is there any possibility of changing the pilot stations [identified]?**

No

- 17. Will CTA provide the necessary infrastructure (AC power and communication cables) for the new faregates?**

Yes

- 18. Will CTA require rail safety training for the faregate installation workers? If so, please provide: 1) location of training and 2) duration (hours) of training.**

No

- 19. Will CTA shut down the pilot station entrance during installation, or will the entrance remain in service?**

CTA will aim to keep entrances in use as much as possible, but depending on the particularities of the specific stations, further discussion with selected vendors to understand installation timeframe will be needed to determine feasibility.

- 20. Can CTA please provide a list of other non-Ventra/non-payment related integrations that will be required (e.g., fire alarm, emergency, etc.)?**

The ability for customers to enter or exit in the case of no power is required. CTA is interested in understanding what other integrations may be possible, however depending on the specific location, integrations may not be feasible during the pilot.

21. CTA mentioned extensive efforts to prepare APIs and Open Architecture structures to facilitate integration between its Ventra system and third parties. Are those efforts complete and have the solutions been tested in operation? For integration with any other in-station systems, is that documentation available?

No, we are not preparing APIs, third party vendors will work with Ventra devices and CTA's fare systems contractor. We will not be integrating with any other systems currently.

22. What is the communication protocol between the existing faregate control system and Ventra Reader? Is it RS-422 or Ethernet?

Ethernet.

23. Can CTA be more specific about its operational and customer service criteria in selecting the eleven stations proposed for piloting?

CTA considered the number of fare arrays per station, average boardings, and geographic spread of pilot locations as well as station types (underground, elevated, highway median).

24. What in-station staffing or customer support does CTA have of plan to implement in support of the pilots?

CTA will assign a project manager to the pilot program who will coordinate with key staff and subject matter experts. Field support will be available from time to time, but the vendor should identify means to manage day- to-day pilot functionality.

25. According to the Evaluation Process, the 12-month pilot includes development, implementation, and evaluation. Does the aforementioned evaluation mean the post-pilot evaluations? If not, what is the difference between the evaluation in the 12-month pilot and post-pilot evaluations?

There will just be one evaluation period.

26. Does this 12-month pilot include the integration test and verification process (after development and before implementation) at CTA's lab? If the verification process is necessary, should the selected innovator take responsibility for the equipment for testing? Innovators should test the integration and verify functionality before installation begins.

- 27. Regarding the integration with the Ventra system, when can the selected vendors get the API documentation for both the existing fare system/Ventra readers and the forthcoming Ventra system upgrade? Please provide the estimated timing for both.**

Necessary documentation will be provided to vendors once a pilot begins. The proposed timeline should account for any data collection or necessary field visits.

- 28. What evidence of product readiness should be included in the application - for example, production references, test results, certifications, technical drawings or photographs of an operational installation?**

It is up to the innovator to demonstrate product readiness to CTA. Examples of real-world applications with other clients can provide strong evidence.

- 29. What are the exact dimensions, weight and required mounting clearances for the Ventra reader? What physical power, data and communications connections are available, including connector and cabling requirements?**

CTA will provide documentation to selected vendors.

- 30. Will Ventra reader interface documentation and API information be available before the Phase 2 presentation? Will CTA also provide development readers or access to a test environment before pilot installation?**

CTA will provide documentation to selected vendors.

- 31. If station drawings, dimensions, power, networking, conduit and existing-equipment information are not available until after pilot award, should application pricing include assumptions or allowances for unknown site conditions?**

Some assumptions on pilot costs may need to be made as this information will not be provided during the application period.

- 32. What operational support will be required during the 12-month pilot, including local staffing, spare parts, service-level commitments, work-order integration and reporting frequency?**

The vendor will need to establish real-time monitoring of their respective equipment, along with optimal reporting, and provide 24-hour emergency availability and service support.

- 33. The link provided for new i-supplier registration is not working (<https://cta.dbesystem.com/>). Kindly provide the correct link so we can register before the application deadline on 24th August.**

This is the correct link.

34. Please confirm the certifications required to participate in the pilot program. Eg: Environmental certifications. Do we need to include these certifications with our application (share via email to InnovationStudio@transitchicago.com)

No certifications are required to participate in the pilot program.

35. Is there a rough BOQ that can be provided for the scope of the pilot, to ensure that we can prepare an accurate cost proposal?

It is up to the innovator to propose the details of the pilot, which will be turned into a scope of work if selected by CTA, so there is not a BOQ available.

36. How is the station fire alarm panel interface provisioned at pilot locations: dry-contact relay drop, addressable module, or network/software trigger? Please confirm the required fail-safe egress behavior on alarm and on loss of power.

This information is different from station to station and can be provided to the selected vendor once the pilot begins.

37. According to the information provided by CTA, it is necessary to validate CTA transit cards with the Ventra reader in the pilot fare gates. A) Are the cards validated independently by Ventra reader? B) Does the reader download automatically the configuration information necessary for the validation? C) Does it upload automatically the transaction records? D) Could CTA provide high level description of the level of integration?

All validation is provided by Ventra devices and the fare device back office.

38. For an accurate assessment of the pilot costs and timeline, could CTA provide a high-level description of the API to integrate with the Backoffice of the existing Fare System, such as technologies and functionalities provided by the API?

Information will be shared with the selected vendors upon award.

39. Does the integration with the BackOffice include uploading validation records or other operational transaction records?

Information will be shared with the selected vendors upon award.

40. Does the integration with the BackOffice include reporting status or alarms information for monitoring purposes? Does it include receiving control commands?

Information will be shared with the selected vendors upon award.

41. Please clarify the type of information required from the applicant in question 11. As the installation is in the main entrance of a station, we understand that this is the CTA property and no other public right of way is applicable. Is our understanding correct?
Yes.

42. To accurately estimate the pilot operation and maintenance costs, please clarify the maintenance responsibilities between CTA and the vendor. Specifically, will CTA provide Level 1 maintenance services?

All maintenance of pilot equipment will be handled by the awarded vendor(s). CTA personnel will maintain power and communications feeds in stations. Please note that Innovation Studio is unable to cover costs associated with labor as part of the pilot.

43. For an accurate assessment of the pilot costs, please outline what documentation will be required from the selected vendor, if any (manuals, plans, etc)

The vendor should include installation plans, drawing as-builts, technical summary of operations. Additional documentation may be needed depending on the specific innovation.

44. Please specify if CTA has any minimum/maximum height requirement for the fare gate overhead gantry.

Since every station is unique, a site survey will be needed to confirm measurements.

45. Will the vendor be responsible for dismantling the current faregates and transporting them to a warehouse?

No

46. Will the vendor be responsible for reinstalling the current faregates once the pilot is complete?

No

47. Will CTA provide a warehouse for the dismantled faregates and for the temporary storage of the vendor faregates?

CTA and its existing contractors will be responsible for removing and storing faregates. If temporary storage is needed for materials for the pilot, please note that requirement in your application.

48. Could you please clarify any site access or installation time restrictions that may apply during the pilot implementation? Specifically, will installation activities be required to take place during non-revenue service hours or overnight to minimize impact on station operations?

Depending on the selected location, it is likely that installations should take place during non-revenue service hours, but this will be determined with the project team once the program begins.

49. Is there a specific faregate barrier-action that is desired? (e.g. swinging barriers vs. barriers that slide or retract into faregate housing)

No.

- a. Some faregates have narrow housing (swinging barriers), while retractable barrier faregates have much wider housing.

- b. Are there any floor-space restrictions? Do new faregates need to fit within the same footprint as existing?**

Yes.

- 50. Is CTA specifically seeking new gates, or would modifications/modernization to existing infrastructure to deter fare evasion also be of interest?**

CTA is open to both new gates and modifications/modernization of existing infrastructure to improve the rider experience and deter fare evasion. Vendors are encouraged to propose whichever approach best meets CTA's goals identified in the problem statement.

- 51. Since existing faregates cannot detect or report fare evasion, and staff currently rely on manually reviewing video to gather statistics, would CTA be open to a solution that automates this detection and analytics reporting process?**

Yes, CTA seeks to monitor data accuracy for fare payments, fare evasion, ridership, and revenue information through this pilot.

- 52. How does CTA envision the Ventra integration approach for the pilot deployment? Should the gate integrate with Cubic's reader, or should the gate have its own validator/reader that is integrated with the Ventra back office? Will vendors integrate with Ventra 2 or 3.**

Selected vendors will integrate with V2 (current validator).

- 53. Can CTA confirm that, at each pilot location, CTA will be responsible for providing and managing the network connectivity required to support the faregate pilot?**

Yes.

- 54. Are there any site-specific installation restrictions, permitting requirements, or limitations on drilling, cabling, or equipment mounting?**

Installation requirements will be determined with the selected vendor during the project.

- 55. Why is the CTA 95th Station not a part of the pilot?**

CTA considered the number of fare arrays per station, average boardings, and geographic spread of pilot locations. We specifically identified locations that we have already verified can support these improvements.

- 56. How does this process relate to CTA's procurement process?**

Innovation Studio was created through an Ordinance from CTA's Board that allows the agency to test improvements more quickly through a pilot program. This process allows CTA to learn about new tools and technologies before pursuing a more standard procurement process.

57. **Is this Innovation Studio faregate pilot related to or expected to feed into the upcoming Ventra 3.0 upgrade, which I understand includes gates, TVMs, and back-office systems? Or will fare gates ultimately be procured separately from Ventra 3.0?**
No, it will not be part of Ventra 3.0. This pilot will integrate with the existing Ventra 2 system, as the Ventra 3.0 timeline does not align with the pilot's schedule.
58. **Is there a fare recovery goal for this project?**
The goal would be to reduce fare evasion across the board, but we do not have a set target. Through this pilot we are seeking solutions that can help CTA better collect data on fare evasion in real-time.
59. **Is the expectation that a vendor would propose a pilot at one location only?**
Innovators can propose a pilot at one or more pilot locations.
60. **Will the CTA keep assessing ADA entry point ideas? And will there be a deadline internally, for program scope changes, since technology upgrades occur so often?**
The Vendor shall comply with all applicable ADA/ABA accessibility standards and shall install ADA compliant gates at all locations where ADA compliant gates currently exist.
61. **Since this program focuses on readiness to deploy, has there been any instances or pathway in the past where a student could participate and contribute in the innovation project given the fact that they don't have a company to align with the deployment aspect.**
At this time, CTA can only able to accept proposals from innovators who are registered to do business in Illinois. We encourage any students who are interested in CTA to apply for future internships at transitchicago.com/careers
62. **During Phase 2 evaluation and presentation, is there an expectation of an on-site demonstration of faregate equipment at CTA?**
This is not a requirement.
63. **Will architectural drawings and measurements for the stations and legacy equipment placement be available?**
These will be made available to selected pilots; we are unable to share that information ahead of the application submission period.
64. **When “technology” is mentioned, is that only applicable to hardware side (installation), or data-driven solutions, including data science, machine learning, artificial intelligence is eligible too?**
We are open to both hardware and software proposals.
65. **Are you planning to kick off the pilot program in January 2027?**

The earliest we would be able to take pilot recommendations to our CTA Board would be December 2026 so it is likely that we will begin implementing these innovations in early 2027.

66. For deployment, will conduit runs be made only through overheads?

In certain locations it can vary, but we typically prefer overhead.

67. Does CTA have a contractual relationship with the back-office provider to support integration?

Yes.

68. Is the documentation from the Ventra system that may be needed to support integration fully developed and documented?

Yes. Substantial Ventra integration documentation is already available. While documentation needs vary by solution type, many integrations don't require an extensive API, so existing materials will generally suffice.

69. How does CTA define success for this pilot in balancing the dual goals of improving customer experience and deterring fare evasion, and what specific metrics will be used to evaluate each?

CTA seeks to balance ease of entry with deterring fare evasion with the goal of creating a more modern and welcoming environment. Some of the metrics that CTA will seek to evaluate through this pilot program are tap time, operational impacts, rider feedback and fare evasion decline.

70. The problem statement emphasizes creating a more 'modern, accessible and welcoming' faregate experience. What are the biggest pain points for riders with the current faregates that this pilot most hopes to solve.

Some of the existing pain points include use of fare gates with a suitcase, grocery cart, or large backpack. In addition, there is not always a consistent experience with the accessible gates closing and latching in a timely fashion. In addition, cues that make it clear and obvious when you can and cannot go through are not always lit or audible. These cues are critical for accessibility purposes and for all riders to be able to use the system with ease.

71. Will there be any information about how participants who are not part of CTA program could manage (Ventra) or how is the integration with the back office in order to download operational configuration as well as upload monitoring messages or transaction records?

Information about integration with Ventra will be provided to selected vendors.