



# Meeting the Moment: Transforming CTA's Post-Pandemic Future



## Message from the President

As our region's beautiful fall foliage begins to give way to falling temperatures, CTA is continuing its aggressive and focused campaign to improve service with our **Meeting the Moment Action Plan**. This month's progress update reflects the hard work, focus and commitment that my staff has utilized to make significant improvements in CTA service since unveiling the plan last August.

Each month, we are seeing improvements across key performance areas and I am heartened by our progress, but there is still more work to do. Our employees understand the urgency of the moment and, each day, we are making strides towards significant improvement of the CTA travel experience. Additionally, we are working with and reaching out to our customers, elected officials, non-profit organizations and businesses to spread the message that CTA is hiring, making strides in its service optimization efforts and pushing forward every day to provide the best bus and rail service possible.

I thank you for your continued support of the CTA. We thank you for the opportunity to serve your public transit needs.

Sincerely,  
Dorval R. Carter, Jr.



## Pillar 1: Deliver reliable and consistent service

### CTA introduces new, temporary rail schedules to address service issues

Aligning CTA's service schedules with our current number of bus and rail operators is one of the most important ways that CTA can immediately and positively impact our ability to deliver reliable service. While CTA is bringing more employees aboard each week, we are also ensuring that we are reducing long wait times and inconsistent rail service, *right now*.

On October 23rd, [CTA introduced new rail schedules](#) that reflect our efforts to provide service based on current workforce levels. This rail schedule optimization is a temporary adjustment that will address current issues with inconsistent and unreliable service while the CTA continues to pursue aggressive hiring strategies for both bus and rail operators.

For the past several weeks, there have been noticeable improvements in rail service reliability following the implementation of the new schedules. Most notably, the system has experienced significant reductions in double and triple headways and shortened customer wait times across the system.

Pages two and three of the [Meeting the Moment scorecard](#) show the results from our service optimization work.

#### Key takeaways

- In October, 77.2 percent of systemwide rail service was delivered. This is an increase from 71.8 percent in August 2022.
- Triple headways are down 80 percent and double headways are down 37 percent. These are instances of customers experiencing long wait times for trains.
- On the Brown, Green and Pink Lines, we have improved weekday schedule service delivery by upwards of 16 percent. Weekday reliability on the Orange Line has reached 96 percent.

While service has improved in many areas, the Blue Line and Red Line service continue to see challenges from workforce unavailability, slow zones on the Blue Line Forest Park branch, and

intermittent weekend construction impact. We are focused on addressing these issues and will continue to look for opportunities and investments to further improve the service.

We will be making similar adjustments on the bus side soon and look forward to notifying you regarding those improvements.

Beyond more information on service optimization in our scorecard, you will also see more detail on bus and rail ridership results. Specifically, how current ridership is performing compared to pre-COVID levels by rail line and bus route group – such as Loop routes, South Side routes, and other operational groups. You can also see ridership by weekday, weekend and time of day to see where we are seeing strong ridership recovery and where we are experiencing a slower return to pre-COVID ridership levels.

### **CTA continues to roll out job fairs**

CTA is also continuing its aggressive hiring and recruitment campaign with two job fairs in November, including [one held last Friday at Olive Harvey College](#) on the Far South Side. CTA continues to pursue applicants for bus operator and bus mechanic positions—both of which are unionized jobs with competitive pay, pension, excellent health benefits and opportunities for advancement. We are continuing to utilize every medium at our disposal to get the word out about these fairs and encourage potential jobseekers to consider working for CTA.



## **Pillar 2: Enhance safety and security for riders**

### **Progress continues on K-9 security unit rollout**

CTA continues to make progress on the deployment of our two-person K-9 teams. As of mid-November, the number of full trained units is up from 28 last month to 40. We anticipate the full deployment of 50 teams by year's end.





## Pillar 3: Improve the customer experience at our facilities

### *Refresh and Renew update*

CTA maintenance and cleanings crews have made [outstanding progress towards the agency's 2022 goals](#) for station improvements and investments under our *Refresh & Renew* program. As of this writing, our staff has completed more than 80 percent of the work outlined for nearly 30 rails stations that were scheduled to receive extensive improvements, and more than 90 stations slated to receive painting and lighting improvements this year.

*Refresh & Renew* does far more than just beautify stations. Improved lighting, surface repairs and replacement of outdated or damaged signage all contribute towards making our customers and employee safer. Cleaner stations with fresh paint and graffiti removed make the CTA travel experience more pleasant and attractive, which encourages ridership.

In total, CTA anticipates investing \$3.5 million in *Refresh & Renew* investments in 2022. We will provide updates regarding additional investments we make into the system under the program in the future.



## Pillar 4: Upgrade our digital tools to improve rider communication

### ***Meeting the Moment* scorecard**

CTA's [Meeting the Moment scorecard](#) is an important tool to ensure that we are as transparent as possible regarding the steps we are taking related to our action plan and the progress that is being made because of those efforts.

While discussion about CTA service issues is ongoing in the news media, on social networking platforms and elsewhere, it is important that people know what we are doing. This scorecard provides information that will go a long way towards adding more data for consideration among those watching our progress.

We recently enhanced the scorecard from a summary one-page document to a six-page document, which now includes several charts and graphs to show when and where our ridership has seen growth. This detailed information dives into a before-and-after analysis of the new rail schedule implemented on October 23 and allows riders to track our progress by rail line and weekday-versus-weekend service.

Currently, the scorecard is primarily focused on rail service. In the near future, however, we will provide additional analyses on bus service as we optimize bus schedules.

Our most recent report card demonstrates that we are doing well in terms of hitting some of our rolling targets, but just as it will undoubtedly show monthly progress in key areas, it will reveal where we are experiencing challenges and need to improve. Anyone interested in following our progress is encouraged to watch our scorecard closely.

### **Bus and Train Tracker updates are coming**

We are continuing to work on updates our bus and train trackers. These improvements will directly benefit our riders and we look forward to notifying you about them in the future.



## Pillar 5: Invest in our employees

### CTA announces an incentive package for union employees

The transportation industry is facing challenges attracting new employees and retaining current ones. CTA is doing everything we can to combat these challenges and make CTA a long-term career destination. Last week, we announced our plan to provide financial incentives to new hires and existing employees. Specifically, we are offering the following incentives to union employees in certain job titles:

- **Hiring bonus**—all new bus operators, bus mechanics and rail car repairers hired in 2022 and 2023 will receive a \$1,000 hiring bonus. The bonus will appear on the employee's first paycheck, and employees must remain with CTA for one year, or be required to pay back the bonus.
- **Retention incentive**—eligible employees will receive a retention incentive payment after every six-month period worked, through December 2023. The incentive is equal to 3 percent of their hourly rate for actual hours worked, up to a maximum of 1,250 hours per six-month period. The retention incentive will be paid to all eligible ATU-represented employees (except employees newly hired as bus mechanics and railcar repairers in 2022 and 2023) on our payroll at the time payments are issued.
- **Increased starting rate** for bus and rail operators, mechanics and car repairers.

These new employee incentives are in line with recommendations made in a recent report by the American Public Transportation Association. The [Transit Workforce Shortage Study](#) notes that financial incentives are among many strategies U.S. transit agencies can address unprecedented worker shortages.



# Customer Engagement

## CTA customer survey results

Along with enhancing transparency through our scorecard, a key component of the **Meeting the Moment** initiative is ongoing, focused assessment of the impact that our investments and improvements have on our customers' travel experience. The need for CTA to determine and assess customer mood is not new—we frequently utilize surveys for that exact purpose. The surveys that immediately pre-dated the release of our plan, however, and those that follow for the foreseeable future, will be especially useful in helping us move CTA beyond our current challenges.

CTA conducted a recent customer survey of frequent and infrequent CTA riders who travelled between April, May and June of this year. This survey was completed days **before** the **Meeting the Moment** action plan was unveiled. In fact, its results show that our plan was exactly the right thing to do.

The data captured by the survey confirmed what we already knew: our customers were dissatisfied with wait times, service reliability, Bus Tracker accuracy and personal security. While there were also positive takeaways, the issues they raised help provide a baseline beyond the numbers in areas where we are experiencing challenges.

CTA will be conducting additional surveys throughout the next year to get a clearer sense of our action plan is impacting rider decisions and how riders are feeling about the system. These surveys are excellent tools to help ensure that we are clear regarding what CTA riders are thinking and experiencing in their own words.

## Take the latest CTA survey



CTA wants to hear from you about your experience as a rider. The purpose of this survey is to better understand customer travel preferences and to identify opportunities to improve CTA service.

Scan our QR code or go to [research.net/r/CTAMTM](https://research.net/r/CTAMTM). This survey closes on Monday, November 28<sup>th</sup> at 12pm.