

Metra Underutilized on the South Side

As published in the Hyde Park Herald December 9, 2015. Resolved, HPKCC board November 2015

Dear Editor:

The Metra Electric, which serves Chicago's Southside and South Suburban communities, is a hugely underutilized asset. If run like CTA lines, with trains every 10 or 15 minutes, full Ventra integration, and a transfer discount, the Metra Electric could unlock the enormous development potential of the Southside and South Suburbs.

The Metra Electric differs from Metra's other commuter lines. The Electric was built as a transit line much like the CTA. With its electrified tracks and complete separation from the freight network, the Metra Electric is well suited to serve many more residents.

The Metra Electric serves many key destinations like the University of Chicago, the Pullman district, Chicago State, the Museum of Science and Industry, Governor State, McCormick Place, the South Shore Cultural Center, and the proposed Lakeside Development. The communities surrounding its stations are densely populated and walkable, ideal areas for rapid transit development.

Today, the Metra Electric is hampered by a fare structure more appropriate for suburban lines and a lack of schedule and fare integration with Pace and CTA buses. Most important, the trains run too infrequently to serve the needs of the community.

With more frequent and affordable service, current residents could access jobs across the region, and communities along the route would become more attractive places to live and locate businesses. Furthermore, Metra Electric service could be extended to O'Hare using existing right-of-ways, which would provide better connections among the universities and cities in the Midwest, and would strengthen Southside and South Suburban access to worldwide markets.

We call on Metra, Pace, the CTA, and our elected officials to work together to:

- Integrate fares and schedules across the agencies using the Ventra card and a transfer discount
- Increase the frequencies on the Metra Electric lines to every 10 to 15 minutes
- Investigate the cost of extending the Metra Electric to O'Hare
- Increase federal, state, and local funding to accomplish the above.

Sincerely,

- **4th District Senior Advisory Committee**
- **7th Ward Advisory Committee**
- **Active Transportation Alliance**
- **Alliance of the South East**
- **Center for Neighborhood Technology**
- **Chicago Hyde Park Village**
- **Coalition for Equitable Community Development**
- **Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference**
- **Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce**
- **Midwest High Speed Rail Association**
- **South Chicago Chamber of Commerce**
- **South East Chicago Commission**
- **South East Side Block Club**