

Introduction

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to address the System Performance Working Group on behalf of the Chicago Transit Authority. Our mission is to deliver quality, affordable transit services that link people, jobs, and communities. In my testimony today, I'll describe the following general topics, in order: CTA's Service Planning policies and methodologies, CTA's program to communicate with its customers, Regional Policy Issues, and CTA's system-wide performance measures.

Section: Service Planning

CTA's service area encompasses 262 square miles with roughly 3.5 million residents. The dynamic nature of development and changing travel markets in the service area requires constant review of options pertaining to new services, including the increase or reduction of service on existing routes.

CTA's board-adopted Service Standards, available on the CTA website, guide service allocation decisions based on rational and fair evaluation methods and the constraints of budget and vehicle availability. Importantly, the Standards are also intended to best balance the service attributes most important to riders to offer the best service to the broadest population possible within resource constraints.

CTA Planning staff continually analyzes data at a route-by-route level in accordance with these Service Standards. In addition to manually-collected observational and customer survey data, CTA utilizes the large quantity of automatically-collected data in its analyses, including data from the navigation and passenger counter systems installed on every CTA bus, the fare collection system both on buses and at rail stations, and more. CTA updates its bus schedules at least four times per year, and its rail schedules at least twice per year, incorporating any applicable service changes. Note that even between these intervals, CTA is constantly monitoring service requirements related to special events and construction projects and issuing temporary schedule bulletins accordingly.

The key measurements and policies as applied by CTA's Service Standards are: service coverage, span of service, frequency of service, crowding, and efficiency. To provide a sense of the scale of the system that is analyzed according to these standards, during peak periods we have over 1,500 buses in service on about 130 routes, serving well over 10,000 different bus stops located throughout 1,300 miles of streets. Meanwhile, over 1,000 rail cars are in service using 288 miles of track spread over eight routes, serving almost 150 stations.

CTA's service coverage policy is to provide a maximum walking distance of ½ mile to the nearest route or station within CTA's statutory service area, during most times of the day,

excluding late night periods. This coverage is primarily provided by the robust grid of arterial streets roughly every ½-mile throughout Chicago and its adjacent suburbs. A route's span of service, or the hours and days in which it operates, is related to the service coverage policy as well as efficiency considerations. CTA's "key route" network, roughly correlating to a 1-mile grid of bus routes and CTA's radial rail lines, have a minimum span of service of 16 hours a day, seven days a week. Other support routes have market-driven span of service.

A route's service frequency, also representing the wait time for customers, is established based on considerations of crowding, efficiency, and network performance. CTA maintains targets for the maximum load per vehicle for different times of the day, and will set service frequency sufficient to meet these targets.

During hours of operation, CTA's minimum allowable service frequency is every 30 minutes. CTA's routes form an interconnected network, in which many riders use more than one service to reach their destination. CTA's bus routes generally form a grid throughout the service area, providing ubiquitous access and coverage. CTA's rail routes generally radiate outward from the Chicago Loop, with several routes heavily oriented around collecting and distributing riders from neighborhood bus routes for high-speed, high-capacity travel into the Loop. Because CTA's bus routes and rail lines are mutually dependent, consideration for minimum allowable frequency within efficiency constraints is important to provide an effective network.

Services are planned in coordination with Pace and Metra to ensure efficient regional connectivity between transit services. CTA and Pace meet quarterly to discuss issues pertaining to coordinating schedules where routes intersect and the structuring of routes on the periphery of the CTA service area. CTA coordinates with Metra on major construction projects (such as the Red Line South Reconstruction) and also operates bus routes geared towards Metra terminals in downtown Chicago.

Section: Serving and Communicating with CTA's market

Providing the best service to our riders requires a broad range of public communication strategies, including information and alerts pertaining to service, market research surveys, and public meetings. Such communication efforts also extend to innovative technological deployments, such as CTA's Bus Tracker and Train Tracker systems, which provide next arrival time information via the internet, mobile devices, and via signage at stations and bus shelters.

CTA conducts extensive research on an ongoing basis, ranging from large system-wide surveys to those targeted at very specific times and locations to inform potential service change decisions. For example, the seating configuration of CTA's new 7000 Series rail cars, currently in

procurement, was developed following market research including both rider surveys and observational studies.

CTA conducts a system-wide customer satisfaction survey every 2 to 3 years. Along with overall satisfaction measures, this survey measures customers' ratings of fifty-nine elements of service in the following areas: Service Delivery; Information; Communications on Bus and Train; Employees' Performance; Personal Safety; Comfort while Riding; Appearance; Access to Service; and Regional Satisfaction. The survey also calculates which elements are statistically most important to riders' overall satisfaction scores. Broadly speaking, all of these characteristics are important to riders, with the availability of service, reliability of service, and personal safety being paramount.

According to the 2011 Customer Satisfaction Survey, eighty-one percent of customers are satisfied with CTA service overall. As of the most recent Customer Satisfaction survey in 2011, 76% of riders were satisfied with their safety on board buses and trains, and 72% were satisfied with safety while waiting at stations and stops. Since 2011, CTA has undertaken a major initiative to expand its camera network at stations and on-board. All new buses and rail cars come with 360-degree cameras already installed, and older vehicles are being retrofit with such technology. Additionally, over 3,600 cameras now thoroughly monitor CTA's 146 rail stations, and CTA's buses and railcars.

CTA Market Research also conducts a Travel Behavior and Attitude survey approximately every 5 years. This survey collects information about CTA's market share within the CTA service area. The survey not only assesses differences among CTA customer groups, but also surveys non-transit-riders.

All forms of communication require consideration of how best to ensure that the message reaches the full target audience and that all stakeholders are represented in the public process. CTA has also conducted market research into its market base with limited English proficiency and adjusted its communication program accordingly.

Though CTA no longer operates paratransit services, considerations of accessibility are nonetheless paramount at CTA. The Chicago Transit Board established the ADA Advisory Committee to facilitate dialogue between the CTA and the disability community and provide recommendations regarding CTA's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Tremendous progress has been made over the past 2 decades since the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed: 100% of CTA's bus and rail fleets are now equipped with ramps and securement areas for accessibility, and over 65% of CTA's rail stations now have elevators or

ramps for accessibility, up from under 50% just 10 years ago. When the Dan Ryan branch re-opens following reconstruction in a few weeks, it will now be fully accessible. CTA and the City of Chicago are also planning major investments to make more stations accessible in the coming years, including Wilson station in Uptown and Washington/Wabash in the Loop.

Section: Regional Policy Issues

In addition to CTA's detailed focus on serving the customers within its service area, CTA recognizes its role as one piece in a large and complex puzzle by actively participating in regional planning processes and initiatives. This partnership and collaboration is best embodied by the current comprehensive 30-year plan for Chicagoland, GOTO 2040. As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) led the development of GOTO 2040 to coordinate investments and focus across transportation, land use, and public policy to best address economic development and quality of life goals for all residents of the region. As such, CTA ensures that its major system expansion and projects align with the priorities established in the regional plan.

CTA's transit system is well positioned to serve continued economic growth in Chicago's Central Area, the core of the region. As has been reported in the media in recent months, the most recent census demonstrated Chicago's distinction of having the largest population growth in the downtown core of any city in the country. Furthermore, the past few years have seen a growing trend of major corporate relocations into the downtown area, both from outlying areas of Chicagoland and from other regions. The CTA transit network is both a critical piece of the current desirability and attractiveness of downtown Chicago, as well as key to supporting continued growth. As of CTA's most recent Customer Satisfaction survey, 89% of commuters were satisfied with the availability of transit service where they work.

In addition to the economic importance of transit service, CTA also takes seriously its role in enhancing regional quality of life through sustainability initiatives including reduced emissions, improved energy efficiency, and best practices in resource conservation. As such, CTA has participated in developing the Chicago Regional Green Transit Plan, as well as the City of Chicago's Chicago Climate Action Plan, among many others. CTA's Green Initiatives include deploying clean and efficient new vehicles¹, supporting multimodal connections², building energy-efficient facilities³, and recycling resources⁴, all of which support the delivery of attractive and sustainable transportation services that remove cars from the road.

¹ Additional Examples: deployment of hybrid and all-electric buses, installation of plug-in engine heaters, support vehicles with alternative fuel technology (including ethanol, CNG, and hybrids)

² Examples: improved bike to transit connections, partnership with car-sharing operations

³ Examples: energy-efficient lighting retrofits, high-speed garage doors, deployment of solar panels, green roofs

CTA is proud of its achievement of significant emissions reductions from its bus fleet over the past decade, starting with the fleet-wide adoption of ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel, drastically reducing the emission of sulfur dioxide. Furthermore, the most recent clean diesel engine technologies provide dramatic improvement over older buses with engines built prior to the EPA's 2007 regulations. With the modernization of its bus fleet, CTA has already achieved fleet-wide reductions of 35-80% of all major pollutant categories, with further progress expected as CTA's oldest buses are retired in the coming years.

Section: Performance & Efficiency

Ultimately, all of these practices and initiatives come back to our core mission, which is to provide quality, affordable transit services that link people, jobs, and communities. It is not enough merely to put programs or processes in place; we also must measure ourselves against benchmarks and past performance to ensure steady progress towards our goals. To that end, CTA tracks a wide variety of performance metrics and key performance indicators across the organization to look both at the effectiveness of outcomes for the customer and the efficiency of management practices. Overall system health metrics are posted monthly on our website for public review.

The reliability of service, being among the most important factors to any transit rider, receives special attention. Given the relatively high frequency of CTA's services, special emphasis is given to the headway, or interval between buses and trains running a route. CTA tracks what we call "big gaps" on a route-by-route and time-by-time basis. A big gap is generally taken to mean a gap in service twice the scheduled headway. Additionally, CTA measures terminal departures, with the expectation that under normal conditions, all trips should begin service no more than 1 minute before or 5 minutes following the scheduled departure time.

At a broader level, CTA continually monitors its performance based on common measures of transit economic efficiency and effectiveness. This includes comparison to peer agencies across the country, as included in our annual budget books. CTA's average operating cost per trip of \$2.35 and average cost per vehicle mile of \$10.91 (as reported to the National Transit Database for 2012) are lower than, or comparable to, our peers. Our average fare revenue per trip in 2012 was \$1.01. Overall, CTA's public operating subsidy per ride is \$1.26.

One of the most basic measures of service efficiency is known as productivity, measured as the number of passenger trips served per vehicle-hour of service provided. CTA's bus system

⁴ Examples: recycling of oil/antifreeze, fluorescent bulb disposal, high-efficiency bus and railcar washers

averages roughly 55 trips per bus-hour, substantially higher than most of our peers and one of the highest in the country.

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony today.