

Metra Clybourn Station Feasibility Study

Stakeholder Advisory Group

Site Visit

Friday, August 28, 2026



Prepared by:

RailPros

R.M. Chin & Associates

A. Overview

Purpose and Context

The Metra Clybourn Station Feasibility Study Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) Site Visit was conducted on Friday, August 28, 2026, to provide SAG members with an opportunity to directly observe existing conditions at the Metra Clybourn Station and within the surrounding station approaches.

The site visit was designed as an experiential complement to the Study's broader stakeholder engagement activities. Rather than relying solely on presentations, maps, photographs, or technical descriptions of existing conditions, the walkthrough allowed stakeholders to experience the station's surrounding transportation, access points, intermodal connectivity, and general environment firsthand and to identify geographically specific feedback issues, opportunities, and constraints based on their own professional, organizational, community, and personal lived experiences.

The walkthrough also expanded the geographic focus beyond the station platforms themselves. Participants were asked to consider the station as part of a larger transportation and neighborhood environment encompassing pedestrian approaches, bicycle facilities, street crossings, bus connections, viaducts, adjacent land uses, and connections to surrounding destinations.

Participant feedback – collected in form of field notes and digital observations – constitutes formal study input that has been transcribed, tagged by location and theme, and all to be considered by the Study team as part of the feasibility study alongside previous and future survey and public comments.

Event Details

Date: Friday, August 28, 2026

Location: Metra Clybourn Station and the surrounding Armitage and Ashland Avenues

Staging Area: Best Buy parking lot across from the Clybourn Station parking lot

Event start time: 10:30 AM

Event end time: 11:30 AM

Format: Guided walking tour with facilitated observations and written/digital field documentation

Invitations to this first SAG meeting were sent via email to major stakeholders in the area including:

- Representatives from the 32nd Ward office
- Representatives from the 2nd Ward office
- Representatives from the Illinois 5th Congressional District
- Representatives from Cook County Board of Commissioners
- Representatives from the 10th State House District office
- Representatives from the 39th State House District office
- Representatives from the 5th State Senate District
- Representatives of relevant agencies including Cook County Department of Transportation and Chicago Department of Transportation
- Representatives of relevant railroads and transit agencies including Union Pacific, Metra, and Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)
- Representatives of advocacy groups/committees across ADA/Accessibility, equitable development/land use, conservation, and transit-oriented development
- Representatives of community/neighborhood groups including Wicker Park, Lincoln Park, Bucktown, and Sheffield
- Representatives of economic/commercial interests in the areas such as neighborhood chambers of commerce as well as large infrastructure/housing development companies operating in the larger North Branch Corridor

Participation

A total of forty-five (45) individuals from twenty-six (26) SAG member organizations were invited to join the Study team on site visit; 24 of whom confirmed receipt of the invitation.

The walkthrough was attended by nineteen (19) members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group, representing 16 of the Study's 26 SAG member organizations and elected offices. This represented participation from approximately 46 percent of the organizations/offices represented on the SAG and provided the Study team with perspectives from a broad cross-section of stakeholder interests.

Eight (8) Study team members (made up of IDOT, and IDOT consultants, RailPros and R.M. Chin & Associates) participated in the site visit. Study team members served in field roles including lead guides, flankers, sweep personnel, providing logistic support. The use of designated lead, flanker, and sweep positions was intended to allow the group to move

safely through the site while keeping participants together and ensuring that staff remained available to answer questions and document observations.

Materials Provided

As part of their invitation to the meeting, attendees received a [digital walk book](#) in advance of the site visit. The Walk book components include: the tour route, site information, and space for documenting observations and feedback at each stop. Printed copies, along with clipboards and writing materials, were also provided at check-in to each participant. The Walk Book served as the primary tool for capturing comments and field notes during the tour. It also included a QR code and link to a [digital comment hub](#) which was activated during the site visit and for 24 hours thereafter, allowing participants to submit images captured on the tour that they wanted to call attention to.

In addition, each stakeholder upon arrival received the following:

- A printed copy of the walk book)
- A pen
- A clipboard
- Binder clip
- Iced bottled waters (offered)

Intended Outcomes

The site visit was designed to achieve several complementary outcomes. First, the activity was **intended to ground stakeholder input in firsthand observation**. Participants were able to physically experience the station's approaches, circulation routes, platforms, underpasses, and connections to surrounding streets rather than evaluating those conditions solely through photographs or plans.

Second, the walkthrough was **intended to generate geographically specific feedback**. Participants were encouraged to identify the precise location of concerns rather than providing generalized comments. The walk book specifically encouraged users to identify locations such as the north stairs, the area under the Kennedy, or the west end of the island platform.

Third, the site visit was **intended to identify issues and opportunities that may not be apparent through conventional stakeholder meetings**. Participants were encouraged to consider safety, rider experience, ADA and universal access, and connectivity and transfers throughout the route.

Finally, the site visit was intended to create a formal and traceable record of stakeholder observations that can be incorporated into the feasibility study.



B. Meeting Components

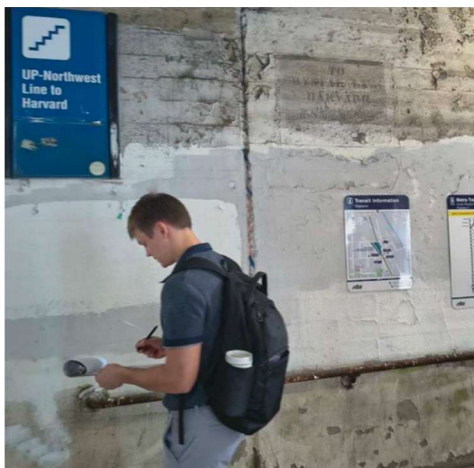
1. Arrival, Introductions and Safety Briefing:

Participants gathered at the Best Buy parking lot, which served as the staging and meeting area for the walkthrough. Study team members were positioned around the Best Buy area and station parking lot to welcome participants, provide directions, distribute Walk Books, and offer iced water.

The opening briefing introduced the route and timing, explained how participants should use the walk book, identified the locations of water and other logistical support, introduced the field staffing structure, and reviewed safety procedures.

Because the activity involved active station platforms, street crossings, viaducts, stairs, and uneven surfaces, the safety briefing was an important component of the event. Participants were instructed to remain with the group, stay behind the yellow tactile edge when at the platforms, and to exercise caution under the viaducts where pavement and lighting conditions may present hazards.

2. Stakeholder Site Visit Walk Book:



The Walk Book served several purposes simultaneously. Including:

Orientation:

It provided participants with the overall route, sequence of stops, approximate timing, meeting location, and debrief location. The route included five observation stops followed by a concluding debrief.

Existing Conditions Reference:

Each stop included a brief description of the conditions participants would encounter and identified specific features to observe.

Facilitation Tool:

Each stop included prompts designed to stimulate discussion without restricting participants to predetermined topics. Participants were explicitly encouraged to record anything they observed, with the prompts serving as starting points rather than limitations.

Documentation Tool:

Participants could record written observations directly in the Walk Book and use the QR code to submit digital comments and photographs.

Formal Public Comment Record:

The walk book communicated that participant observations were formal study input. Comments have been transcribed, tagged by place and theme, and documented alongside other engagement activities.

3. Guided Existing Conditions Walkthrough:

The approximately 60-minute guided walkthrough moved participants through five locations representing different aspects of the station and its surrounding environment.

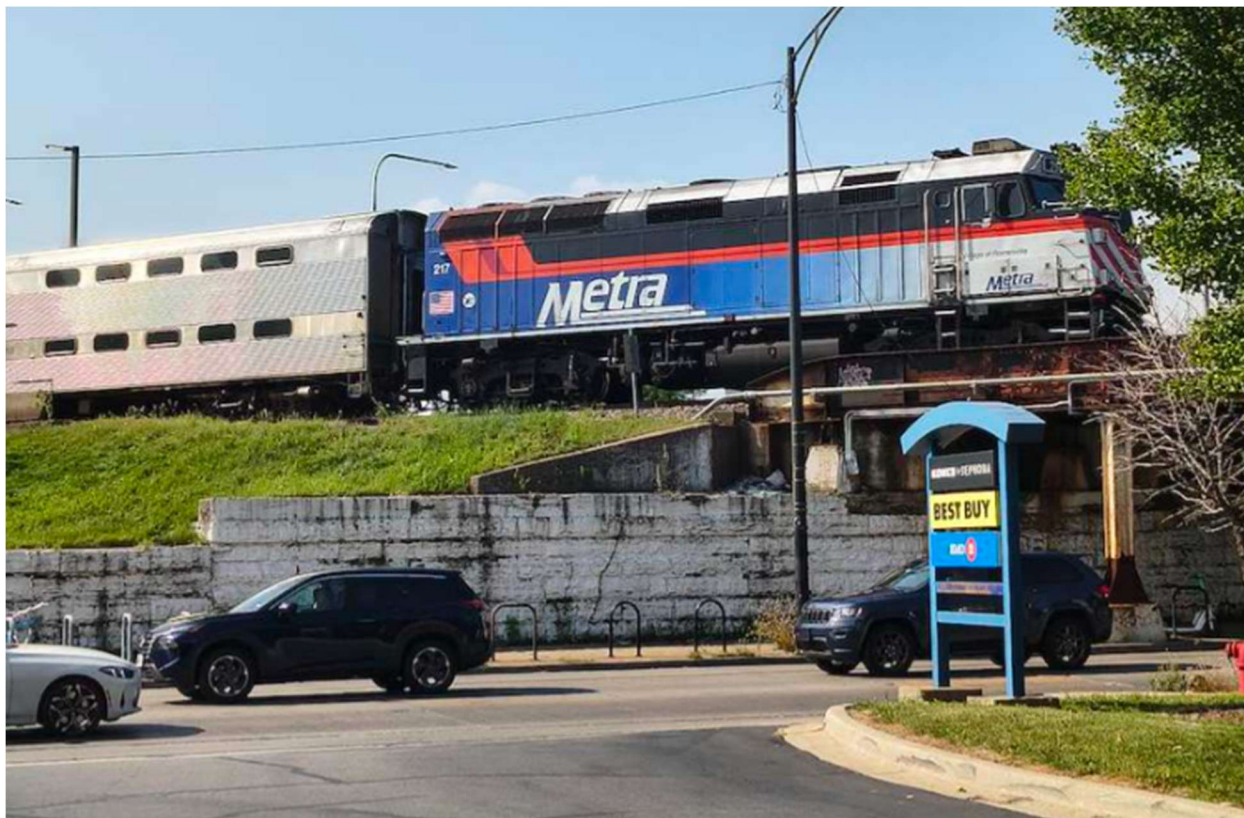
The route was deliberately designed to move from the **arrival experience**, through the **station entrance and platforms**, and then outward into the **surrounding neighborhood and transportation network**.

This progression allowed participants to consider Metra Clybourn Station as a complete passenger journey.



4. Route and Stops

Stop 1 – North Armitage/Best Buy Lot



The walkthrough began at the Best Buy parking lot, which served as the staging area and provided an opportunity to consider the station's northern approach.

Participants were asked to observe the relationship between the Best Buy lot, Armitage Avenue, the station parking lot, bicycle facilities, and the viaducts.

A key physical condition highlighted at this location was the lack of a direct marked crosswalk between the Best Buy area and the station parking lot – which meant the group had to walk back towards the Armitage and Ashland intersection in order to safely cross onto the side of the street where the station is located. The planned route deliberately required the group to cross at the intersection and return to the station lot so participants could experience the additional circulation required to make this connection. The discussion also focused on the overlap of multiple arrival modes within a constrained area, including bus drop-off, pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles.

Participants were encouraged to consider:

- How the station announces its presence from surrounding streets;
- How pedestrians and cyclists approach the station;
- Where transportation modes converge;
- Where conflicts occur;

- Whether the arrival experience is intuitive for first-time users; and
- What improvements would have the greatest effect on the initial station experience.



Stop 2 – Wedge Lot and Bicycle Access

The second stop focused on the station parking area and the constrained space surrounding the primary station access points.

Participants observed the convergence of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle movements and examined existing bicycle parking, station entrances, tunnels, signage, and the relationship between the station and the nearby 606 Trail.

The Study team specifically asked participants to consider how bicycle access could be incorporated into a future station design and whether Divvy and the 606 could play a greater role in the station's multimodal network.

The stop also provided an opportunity to observe:

- Limited wayfinding;
- Limited shelter;
- Existing bicycle facilities;
- The relationship between the parking lot and station entrances;
- The stairs being the only existing means of access to the platforms; and
- Potential pedestrian/cyclist/vehicle conflicts.



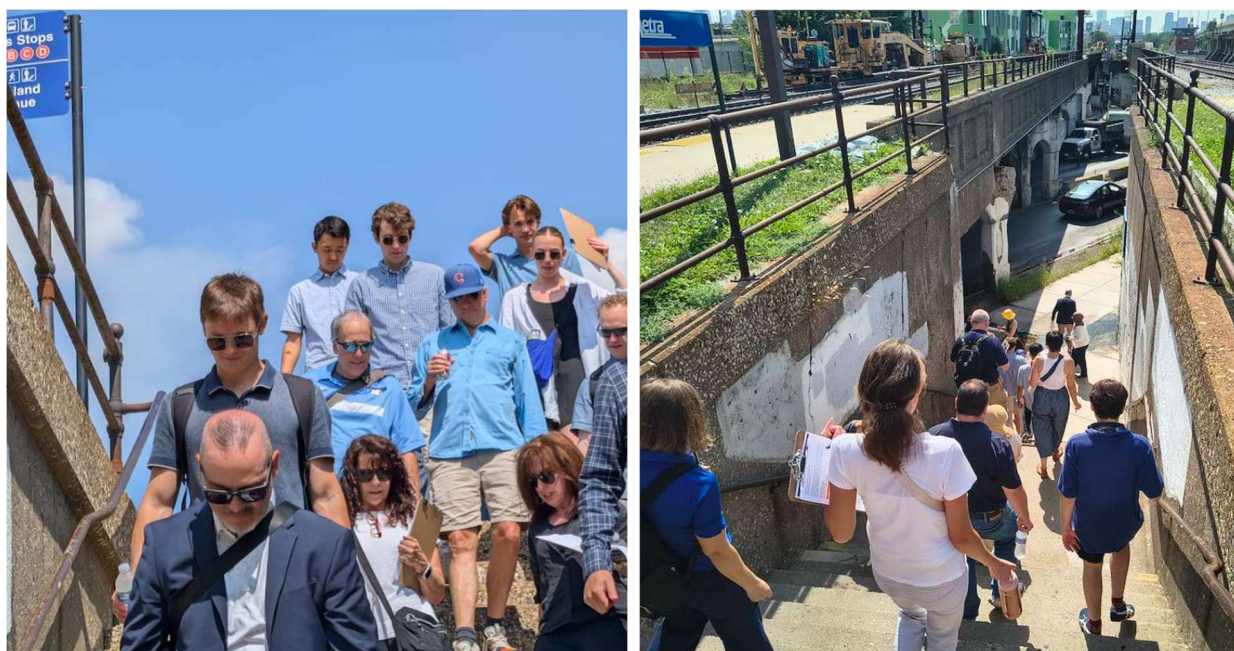
Stop 3 – Stairs and Platforms

At the third stop, participants moved into the station's platform environment to examine the existing stairs, platform configuration, passenger circulation, shelter, seating, signage, and passenger information.

- Participants were asked to consider:
- How passengers move between the station entrance and trains;
- Whether the correct platform and staircase are intuitive to identify;

- Where passengers congregate when trains arrive;
- How platform length affects passenger circulation;
- The adequacy and placement of shelters;
- Seating and passenger comfort;
- Real-time passenger information;
- Potential accessibility improvements; and
- The relative merits and considerations associated with ramps and elevators.

The Study team also used this portion of the walkthrough to encourage participants to observe the difference in platform lengths between the UP-N and UP-NW sides and the resulting implications for passenger distribution and boarding.



Stop 4 – Cortland Street and the Viaducts

The fourth stop moved participants outside the station and down toward Cortland Street, providing an opportunity to examine the station's relationship with the surrounding neighborhood.

Participants observed:

- Station approaches;
- Deteriorating walls;
- Flood-prone stair landings;
- Sidewalk conditions;
- Lighting under rail viaducts;
- Neighborhood pedestrian connections; and bicycle infrastructure.



The Study team emphasized that the viaducts and Kennedy Expressway represent significant physical features that influence how people reach the station, and that the quality of sidewalks, lighting, crossings, and streetscape should be considered part of the overall station experience even when these facilities fall outside the immediate station property.

Participants were asked to consider whether the surrounding pedestrian environment would feel acceptable when traveling alone at night and what combination of lighting, pavement, sightlines, activity, and other improvements would be required to make the approach feel like part of a contemporary transit station.



Stop 5 – Bus and Street Connections at Ashland/Armitage

The final field stop examined the station's relationship to the surrounding street and bus network, particularly at Ashland Avenue, Armitage Avenue, and Cortland Street. Participants observed CTA bus service, bus stop signage, pedestrian crossings, sidewalk availability, lighting beneath viaducts, and the physical process of transferring between bus service and Metra.

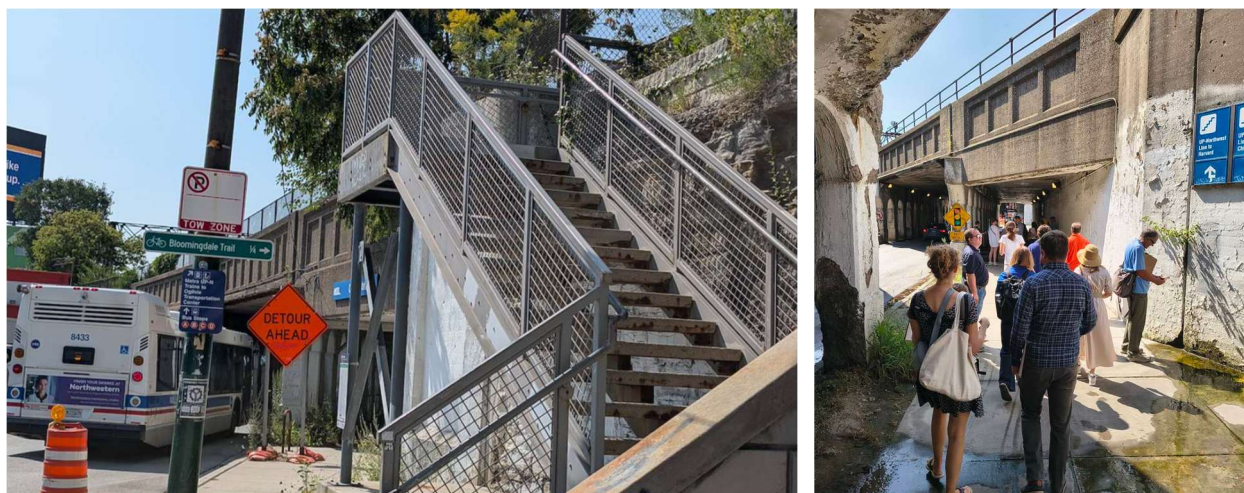
CTA bus routes **#9 and X9 on Ashland Avenue and Route 73 on Armitage Avenue** are important potential feeders to the station. It also notes that transfers between the bus stops and Metra currently involve street crossings, a viaduct underpass, stairs, and limited wayfinding connecting the systems.

Participants were asked to mentally trace the transfer from a bus stop to the station platform and identify where the experience breaks down.

Discussion topics included:

- Bus-to-Metra transfers;
- Street crossing conditions;
- Bus stop locations and signage;
- Wayfinding;
- Lighting;
- Sidewalk width and availability;
- Relationship between transit modes;
- Accessible connections; and
- Opportunities to improve the surrounding street network.

The Study team also called attention to the visibility of bus stop signs and the presence of physical obstructions such as viaducts and bridges that may interfere with their visibility.



Stop 6 – Best Buy Lot (Debrief and Comment Collection)

The site visit concluded at the Best Buy staging area with a debrief, walk book collection, and group photos. Participants were also reminded that the digital Comment Hub would remain open for 24 hours following the walkthrough for submission of additional comments and photographs.

C. Key Observations by Stop

This section summarizes the evidence-based findings of the site visit based on field notes and comments submitted by participants using the comment hub.

Stop 1 – North Armitage/Best Buy Lot

“Pedestrian yield sign or full stop sign [needed]. Side streets leading to the station entrance needs work has a lot of cracks and hard for wheelchair users to cross.”

Participants expressed discomfort at the lack of signage and wayfinding materials at the station, with multiple noting difficulty finding the station entrance. Additionally, participants discussed how the parking lot creates an unwelcoming environment— being too small to properly turn around in, combined with the limited number of parking spaces and the low visibility surrounding the mid-block entrance. Despite the station’s lot entrance being mid-block, there is no crosswalk connecting the entrance to the other side of the road, so participants had to walk half a block down Armitage and cross at Ashland. Additionally, the entrance is not ADA-friendly, with poor tactile pavement, fast traffic, and the lack of audible pedestrian signals creating an unsafe environment for guests with disabilities. Participants also noted that the high-traffic area (arterial roads, the Kennedy Expressway, the Metra trains) combined with the layout of the lot led to uncomfortably high noise levels surrounding the station.

Potential opportunities identified:

1. Upgrades to parking lot
2. Inclusion of mid-block crosswalk
3. Noise barriers/walls
4. Better signage

Recurring issues identified:

1. ADA/Accessibility (including physically as well as hearing and vision impaired)
2. Difficulty with wayfinding
3. Unappealing, uncomfortable, unwelcoming

Stop 2 – Wedge Lot and Bicycle Access

“This is a utilitarian station it gets you where you need to go but you won't enjoy it.”

Participants expressed difficulty parking in the lot, pointing out the size of the lot and the limited visibility from the curb to the road. Participants noted that parking was ambiguous – there was no signage indicating whether parking was free or paid, or whether there was a time limit on how long one could park. One SAG member (an elected official in the area) noted “more parking is a must.” Additionally, participants pointed out that pedestrians must

walk through the parking lot to access the platform, creating an unwelcoming environment. Divvy and Lime services were nonexistent at the station, with the nearest Divvy rack about a five-minute walk away from the station. Participants expressed hesitation at leaving a bike at the station overnight, despite multiple bike racks surrounding the station.

One notable comment came from a participant expressing interest in the Best Buy parking lot across the street, who proposed cooperative parking with the parking lot owners and Metra to allow riders to park in the larger lot.

Potential opportunities identified:

1. Upgrades to parking lot
2. Divvy/Lime Accessibility
3. Better signage

Recurring issues identified:

1. ADA/Accessibility
2. Difficulty with wayfinding
3. Unappealing, uncomfortable, unwelcoming
4. Overly car-dependent

Stop 3 – Stairs and Platforms

“...too many stairs... need ramps in general.”

I hope that when it comes time to design whatever is next, you get creative engineers who think broadly & comprehensively & push through constraints to design something world class. This community deserves it.”

Participants expressed difficulty locating the in and outbound trains, discussing how the station layout is unclear for new users and near impossible for those needing ADA accommodation. One participant requiring ADA accommodation was unable to join the group for this portion of the tour, as the only way up the platforms is via stairs. While there is some signage, it is unclear, and participants had trouble determining which platform was for which Metra line going in each direction. One participant recommended the addition of “spoken signage”, like that which currently exists at Union Station (for instance, an announcement indicating a train is approaching on “Track number 15”).

Much of the participant feedback for this stop surrounded the platform itself, which is primarily a gravel pit with minimal seating and shelter and no restrooms. Additionally, participants expressed feeling unsafe due to the lack of cameras and emergency phones, with one noting they would not want to return. Participants discussed the unkempt appearance of the platform, noting weeds, graffiti, and excessive sun exposure due to a lack

of foliage and shelter. Notably, multiple participants expressed the desire to beautify the platform, referencing murals and pollinator gardens as potential options to revitalize the space.

Potential opportunities identified:

1. Beautification
2. Better signage

Recurring issues identified:

1. ADA/Accessibility
2. Difficulty with wayfinding
3. Unappealing, uncomfortable, unwelcoming
4. Safety

Stop 4 – Cortland Street and the Viaducts

“This looks like a desolate station with limited investment instead of an important multimodal transit hub.”

The primary concerns shared between most participants regarding this stop were safety, visual appeal, and maintenance. Participants noticed overgrown weeds, crumbling viaducts, and significant amounts of leaking/pooling water—which some noted can be a major safety hazard in the winter. Additionally, participants generally viewed this portion of the station as dirty, poorly lit, difficult to navigate, and unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists, referring to the site as “desolate” and expressing concern regarding using the station at night. Like the gravel pit on the platform level, attendees expressed the desire to beautify the space with murals or other art installations, like other viaducts around the city.

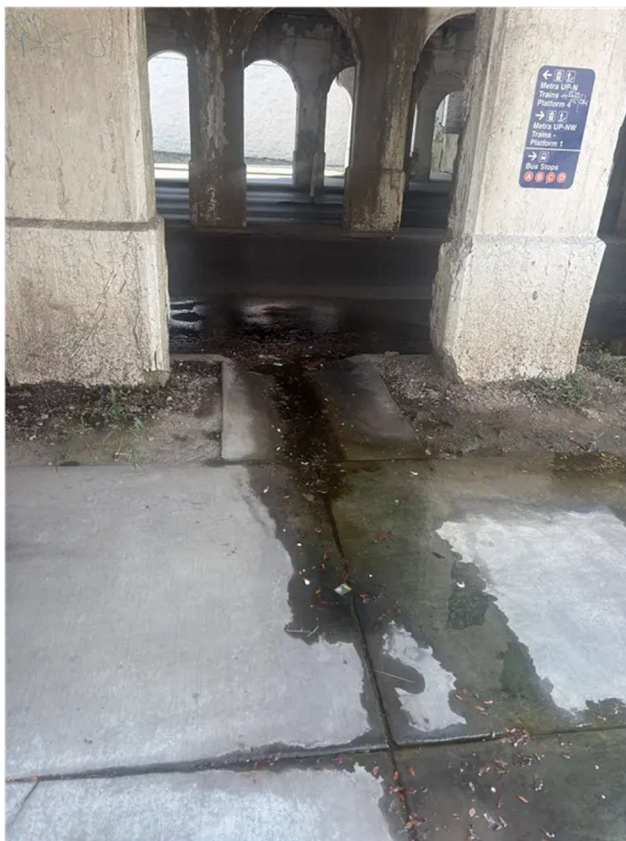


Photo taken and shared by **Liliana Schiller**,
Program Manager, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

Potential opportunities identified:

1. Beautification
2. Better signage
3. Improved lighting
4. Installing a railing between the pier and roadway in viaduct area to better close it away from roadway traffic

Recurring issues identified:

1. ADA/Accessibility
2. Difficulty with wayfinding
3. Unappealing, uncomfortable, unwelcoming
4. Safety

Stop 5 – Bus and Street Connections at Ashland/Armitage

“It's about more than the station - it's about the 1/2 mile area around it & the experience of arriving & departing by all modes.”

Participants noted the lack of signs directing passengers between nearby bus stops and station entrances, highlighting how transferring between bus and train can be extremely difficult, especially for non-residents and people with disabilities. Specifically, some participants noted the lack of inclusive signage and auditory signals (particularly for the vision impaired) on all wayfinding signs, as well as wayfinding signs being too small and located in hard-to-see areas in the dark tunnel-like structure. One participant noted that the staircase on Ashland is extremely easy to miss, which could lead to guests navigating to the further Armitage entrance and missing their connection. Additionally, another participant noted the lack of visible trashcans, leading to litter around the entrance.

Potential opportunities identified:

1. Better signage
2. Improved lighting

Recurring issues identified:

1. ADA/Accessibility
2. Difficulty with wayfinding
3. Unappealing, uncomfortable, unwelcoming

Overall Reflections

“Accessibility must be a top priority, not only because of the ADA, but because anyone can join the disability community at any time. People can acquire disabilities and experience temporary disabilities; they may use the stairs one day but need a ramp the next. I encourage this team to place accessibility at the forefront because accessibility isn't just required, it's good practice.”

Majority of the observations and comments received during the site visit focused on the user experience throughout the station, with almost all participants commenting about the lack of signage, lighting, accessible fixtures, and visual appeal. Participants highlighted the importance of accessibility for non-ambulatory passengers and those with visual or cognitive disabilities, as well as accessibility to and from the station via all modes of transit.

The recurring issues identified throughout this site visit (accessibility, difficulty with wayfinding, unappealing, uncomfortable, unwelcoming, overly car-dependent, and safety) largely surround the theme of **Community & Equity**. Most of these opportunities concern the user experience while at the station, and as the station stands right now, it is seen as inequitable. The ability to experience the station just as riders do daily, and within the context of its surrounding environment might best explain why the overall thematic tone of the field notes and observations from this SAG site visit. Feedback from the first Stakeholder

Advisory Group meeting as well as the Open House identified **ADA/Accessibility** and **Multimodal Connectivity** as primary thematic concerns.

Yet, all these themes are interconnected – making the station equitable to all community members involves making it accessible, both concerning disability access and general access via other modes of transportation.

D. Stakeholder Advisory Group Attendance

Organization	Represented by
Active Transportation Alliance	Maggie Czerwinski
Office of Alderman Brian Hopkins (2nd Ward, Chicago)	Zach Joseph
Office of Alderman Scott Waguespack (32nd Ward, Chicago)	Paul Sajovec
Cook County Commissioner Bridget Degnen (District 12)	Commissioner Bridget Degnen
	Bailey Nelson
	Jack Doyle
	Staffer
Metra	David Kralik
	Jacob Peters
RANCH Triangle Community Conservation Association	Erma Tranter
	Julie Bartholomae
Chicago Transit Authority (ADA Advisory Committee)	Irma Gomez-Fierro
	Cooper Menne
	Jazmin Perez
Trust for Public Land	Jamie Simone
North Branch Works	Jonathan Snyder
City of Chicago Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities	Liliana Schiller
Bucktown Community Organization	Philip Edison
Chicago Department of Transportation	Ryan Richter
Chicago Transit Authority	Jason Wald

E. Study Team Attendance

Name	Affiliation
Abigail Robinson	Illinois Department of Transportation
James Clark	R.M. Chin & Associates
Jennifer Drake	RailPros
Jeremy Cavanagh	R.M. Chin & Associates
John Lifka	RailPros
Michael Booth	RailPros
Roqeebah Olaoniye	R.M. Chin & Associates
Scott Speegle	Illinois Department of Transportation