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175 W Jackson Blvd  
Suite 1550  
Chicago, IL 60604  
312 913 3200  
rtachicago.org

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Michael S. Regan  
EPA Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

**RE: Carbon Pollution Reduction Grant – Transforming Transit: Accelerating a Zero-Emission Fleet in the Chicago Region**

Dear Administrator Regan,

The Regional Transportation Authority of Northeastern Illinois (RTA) requests a Carbon Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) implementation award of **\$375 million for the RTA's *Transforming Transit: Accelerating a Zero-Emission Fleet in the Chicago Region* initiative**. The project funds will be provided to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra Commuter Rail, and Pace Suburban Bus for transit electrification fleet and infrastructure purchases.

The RTA is the unit of local government created to oversee finances, secure funding, and conduct transit planning for the Chicago region's transit operators: CTA, Metra, and Pace. This project will build on ongoing regional collaboration to reduce emissions, enhance bus and train service, and grow ridership, helping advance critical regional and national climate and equity goals.

RTA, CTA, Metra, and Pace worked with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to develop the region's [Priority Climate Action Plan \(PCAP\) for the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area](#). ***Transforming Transit*** is directly connected to strategies and measures in the plan related to Decarbonizing Transportation. Specifically, the RTA is requesting funding to implement two measures included in our region's PCAP: (1) Transition CTA and Pace's bus fleets to 100 percent electric by 2040 (p. 38) and (2) Deploy electric trainsets while retiring Metra's oldest locomotives (p. 38).

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With \$375 million in CPRG funding for *Transforming Transit* the RTA will work with each of the operators to make the following investments:

- **\$125 million for CTA to purchase up to fifty 60-foot articulated buses and two charging cabinets supporting up to 40 pantograph chargers** to be housed in their 103<sup>rd</sup> Street garage and used to support service for at least two of 25 routes originating in the historic Pullman neighborhood on Chicago's Far Southeast Side – a historically disadvantaged community and one of the areas of greatest concern for pollution burdens and vulnerability.
- **\$125 million for Pace to purchase up to eighty-three 40-foot buses** to be housed in their North (Waukegan) and Southwest (Bridgeview) Division garages and deployed along 23 routes. Waukegan and Bridgeview are historically disadvantaged communities vulnerable to pollution and air quality issues.
- **\$125 million for Metra to purchase 32 trailer cars and 8 docking stations** that will allow Metra to retire 16 of its oldest diesel locomotives and add service on three high-ridership lines: Union Pacific North, Milwaukee District West, and the Rock Island Beverly Branch.

Together, these projects allow for immediate advancement of the PCAP measures and each agency's climate goals. The project will build upon current efforts by CTA, Metra, and Pace to modernize their fleets and transition to zero emissions. These transformative investments will also help each of the operators improve the frequency and reliability of their bus and train service, growing ridership and expanding access to jobs and critical services for thousands of area residents.

Together the improvements included in *Transforming Transit* will reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the transportation sector by a **total of 40,568 short tons annually** once fully implemented. In the near term, the project will result in a **135,506 ton reduction from 2025 to 2030**, and a **cumulative 402,165 ton GHG reduction from 2025 to 2050**. As the regional entity already responsible for distributing funding to the three transit operators in Northeastern Illinois, RTA will ensure funds are spent efficiently and project benefits are realized as quickly as possible.



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In line with the Biden Administration's Justice 40 Initiative, the RTA, CTA, Metra, and Pace have committed to prioritizing investments in historically disadvantaged areas. This is especially true for improvements that combat climate change, where the operators have aligned their transition to zero emissions with this mission by largely deploying improvements in communities burdened by poor air quality and environmental justice issues first. This commitment is demonstrated in the project's Climate and Environmental Justice Screening documentation.

This project also aligned with the RTA's regional transit strategic plan, *Transit is the Answer*, approved by the agency's Board of Directors in February 2023. The plan includes a list of action and advocacy items to achieve a vision of safe, reliable, accessible public transportation that connects people to opportunity, advances equity, and combats climate change. The action item: Accelerate the transition to a zero emission regional transit system and prioritize communities burdened by poor air quality, directly aligns with the fleet improvements that would be possible with support from the CPRG implementation grant.

This project will make significant progress on RTA's goals to decrease the environmental footprint of transit and move toward a more sustainable public transportation network while prioritizing communities burdened by poor air quality. Additionally, the capacity improvements brought to the region by this grant will assist in "mode shift" from single occupancy vehicles to public transit, further enhancing the potential for emission reduction in the region. This application is strongly supported by our congressional delegation, state legislators, regional elected and agency officials, community organizations, and nonprofit advocates from across the region. Their letters of support can be downloaded from this webpage: [www.rtachicago.org/grant-support-letters](http://www.rtachicago.org/grant-support-letters). We believe that ***Transforming Transit: Accelerating a Zero-Emission Fleet in the Chicago Region*** is an ideal candidate for a CPRG implementation grant, and we thank you for your consideration.

175 W Jackson Blvd  
Suite 1550  
Chicago, IL 60604

312 913 3200  
rtachicago.org

Sincerely,



Leanne Redden  
Executive Director, Regional Transportation Authority  
312-913-3221  
[leanne.redden@rtachicago.org](mailto:leanne.redden@rtachicago.org)



Dorval Carter, Jr.  
President, Chicago Transit Authority



James M. Derwinski  
CEO/Executive Director, Metra Commuter Rail



Melinda Metzger  
Executive Director, Pace Suburban Bus