



**Regional
Transportation
Authority**

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RTA URGES SENIORS TO APPLY NOW – TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FREE TRANSIT NEXT MONTH *Applications can take 2-3 weeks to process*

Chicago -- The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) stressed today the need for seniors to submit their applications soon – so they're ready to take advantage of free transit on the CTA, Metra and Pace beginning March 17.

“The RTA is working hard to help get seniors signed up to take advantage of this program when it starts next month,” said Steve Schlickman, RTA Executive Director. “Extra staff has been added to assist with the registration process that is averaging between two to three weeks, but seniors shouldn't wait to start taking advantage of the free rides program so they can start riding for free on March 17, he added.”

Many Seniors Already Set

Seniors who already have the RTA's senior reduced fare card can continue to use that exact same card starting on March 17 when the free rides program begins. Before the free rides program began, there were approximately 239,000 seniors that already had reduced fare cards.

For Those Who Need to Register

If a senior does not have the RTA senior reduced fare card and is within three weeks of their 65th birthday, they can sign up at the RTA's Customer Service Center between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at 165 N. Jefferson in Chicago. They can also sign up at any one of the over 200 registration sites throughout the region. To find a site nearby, seniors can go to www.rtachicago.com/seniorsridefree or call the RTA's Travel Information Center at 836-7000 from any local area code and give the operator their zip code to find the closest location.

During the registration process, applicants will be required to present government issued identification to verify their age as well as a photo (approximately passport size – 1 1/2" square) will either be taken or will need to be provided by the applicant.

Applying for the senior reduced fare card can only be done in-person and will take two to three weeks to process.

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For Those Who Have Pre-Registered

Registration for free transit can only be done with the RTA. Those seniors who pre-registered with the State of Illinois have or will receive a letter on how to register for the free transit. Pre-registration is not necessary.

How the Free Ride Program Will Work

For seniors to get their free ride on the CTA or Pace, they will continue to use their senior reduced fare card in the bus farebox or at the train station turnstile. On Metra, seniors need to show their senior reduced fare card to the on-board staff to receive their free ride.

Hi-Tech Free Transit Coming

Seniors using the RTA's senior reduced fare card to access free transit will be transitioned, in the months ahead, to a smart card (similar to the Chicago Card). All card holders will be notified when the cards are available.

About the Seniors Ride Free Program

Legislation passed last month by the Illinois General Assembly and signed by Governor Blagojevich allows senior citizens ages 65 and over who live in the RTA service region of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties to take free public transit rides on fixed routes operated by the CTA, Metra and Pace beginning on March 17. An estimated 900,000 senior citizens live in the northeastern Illinois region, and population trends indicate that this number is growing.

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About the RTA: The RTA provides financial oversight, funding and regional planning for the three public transit operations in Northeastern Illinois: The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus and train, Metra commuter rail and Pace suburban bus and paratransit. For more information, visit www.rtachicago.com and www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org.