



**Regional
Transportation
Authority**

For immediate release

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RTA TIGHTENS BELT TO MINIMIZE TRANSIT SERVICE CUTS *19% Cut Redirects \$7.5 Million to Transit Operations*

Chicago – To help underfunded transit agencies maintain critical service in the event that the State fails to help close a looming \$226 million budget deficit, the Regional Transportation Authority will defer \$7.5 million in spending in order to help limit severe budget cuts that the service boards must make in order to balance their budgets this year.

Effective immediately, the RTA has frozen all hiring and suspended all non-urgent travel. The RTA will also defer a planned relocation of the highly active Travel Information Center (TIC), which answers 15,000 calls each day from riders seeking transit information. The hours of the TIC could also be reduced from a 20-hour to a 15-hour day.

In addition, a systemwide technology upgrade will be put off and approximately \$3.6 million dollars in planning projects will be suspended. Projects being delayed include efforts to implement a universal fare card, work on the introduction of hybrid vehicles for transit use, park-and-ride facilities and transit oriented developments throughout the region. Approximately \$500,000 in marketing and public education initiatives will also be affected.

RTA Executive Director Steve Schlickman said, “We’re trying desperately to protect riders from devastating service cuts and fare hikes, which will come without action from Springfield. We must make some difficult decisions, even delaying important investments, before we cut service to riders.”

Schlickman said that delaying important planning projects, such as the universal fare card initiative, makes it more difficult to achieve the improvements that the region has demanded.

“We have worked hard to bring creative, forward-thinking initiatives to the service boards so that we can build a truly world-class system, but when you are worried about keeping buses, trains and paratransit service running today, it’s very hard to invest in making the system better for tomorrow,” Schlickman said.

“These steps taken today significant and represent a big step backward. They will impact riders and they will make us less effective in our mission,” said Schlickman. “Unfortunately, these are the hard choices we are being forced to make because of insufficient funding – which was the key finding of Auditor General William Holland’s recent management and performance audit of the RTA and the service boards.”

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The RTA seeks state support for a major capital program in the next five years that will bring the entire system into a state good repair and allow major new projects to proceed. The RTA is also seeking legislative authority to raise local revenues to fund operations.

Schlickman said that an aggressive advocacy and public outreach effort over the past year has elevated transit to one of the top priorities among legislators and elected officials across the region and he is hopeful it will translate into action.

“We’ve talked to everyone from the Governor to local mayors, from transit riders to business leaders, to community groups. Everyone understands that transit is the key to reducing congestion and pollution, supporting economic development and strengthening our quality of life. Now the legislature needs to act,” Schlickman said.

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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.



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Regional Transportation Authority *Reductions in 2007 Budget*

To help under-funded transit agencies maintain critical service as state lawmakers near the end of legislative session without action on transit funding, the Regional Transportation Authority will redirect \$7.5 million in spending to pay for CTA and Pace operations for the second half of 2007. Following are highlights and additional details announced May 22, 2007 by RTA leadership.

Deferral of Planning Department Projects	Total \$3,630,000
○ Key projects include:	
▪ Delay of implementation of a universal fare card	
▪ Delay introduction of hybrid electric vehicle study	
▪ Signal prioritization projects to aid the flow of buses	
▪ Multi-modal information kiosks used by travelers	
▪ Numerous transit oriented and economic development projects from through the region, including: Lake Forest, Plainfield, Mt. Prospect, Addison, Bellwood, Evanston, Cicero, Orland Park, Montgomery, Norwood Park, Elgin and Zion	
▪ Integrated customer information system and signage	
▪ Research and development efforts, including express bus network studies	
Freeze on all hiring except to advance the recommendations of the OAG audit report; deferral of the intern program, and limitation on all out-of-region travel.	Total \$624,000
Curtailement of Travel Information Center hours of service.	Total \$759,000
Deferral of computer systems integration and upgrade.	Total \$900,000
Deferral of the Travel Information Center move	Total \$1,127,000
Reduced transit marketing and public education outreach	Total \$493,000
Grand Total	\$7,533,000