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RTA spearheads *Moving Beyond Congestion* campaign
Joining with partners, agency unveils campaign,
website to promote future regional transit

Chicago, IL -- Together with the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra and Pace, the Regional Transportation Authority today announced a campaign for modern transit called "Moving Beyond Congestion," and will launch the campaign's website, *MovingBeyondCongestion.org* on June 30, 2006.

"It's been clear for years that Northeast Illinois needs to talk about and influence transit expansion. With this effort and the full cooperation of the CTA, Metra and Pace, the RTA has begun that dialogue, starting with a focus on the benefits to drivers that our current transit system delivers every day," said RTA Chairman Jim Reilly. "We are asking the public to help us shape a long-term plan for a modern regional transit network that fights severe road congestion while improving transit throughout the region."

According to a U.S. Department of Transportation study released last month, \$4.2 billion is wasted every year on Chicago area commuters sitting in traffic. This averages out to a \$976 per person "congestion tax" resulting in wasted work-hours and fuel consumption. The RTA hopes to ease congestion, support economic development and help improve air quality as intended strategic plan outcomes.

“The nearly \$1000 per person congestion tax will get worse with increased traffic projections for the Collar Counties. Comprehensive, regional transit planning will ease the congestion tax and help save people money,” said Reilly.

“Just imagine what the roads would look like without us,” commented Pace Executive Director T.J. Ross. “People don’t realize that public transit saves them money even if they don’t use it.”

“Our region’s residents have been telling us that they want transit to do more to address congestion problems,” said Metra Executive Director Philip Pagano. “As new residential and commercial centers continue to develop across our region, we want to work with the real estate and business community to plan and create transit services that meet their needs and reduce travel times.”

The strategic plan process began earlier this year with an assessment of the current system. The RTA is now analyzing future scenarios, given mounting congestion issues and the need to maintain the current transit system and upgrade it to meet future needs, Reilly said.

“Northeast Illinois’ economic strength is built on our transportation network,” said Chicago Transit Authority Chairman Carole Brown. “We need to maintain and expand our world-class public transportation system to support good jobs and sustainable communities.”

“Through the strategic plan, the RTA and the service boards plan to build a world-class public transportation system that is convenient, affordable, reliable and safe, and that is the keystone of the region’s growing business opportunities, thriving job market, clean air and livable communities,” Reilly said.

In this process, the RTA’s goals are to provide transportation options, ensure financial viability, enhance livability and economic vitality and demonstrate the value of public transportation.

Strategic plan dialogue is now in progress involving key business, legislative, county, civic, and community leaders and groups among others. Equally important, the RTA encourages the public to become involved in the *Moving Beyond Congestion* campaign by logging on to *MovingBeyondCongestion.org*. The site includes information about the RTA’s strategic plan and the work the CTA, Metra and Pace are doing together to create this plan and help beat the problem of gridlock.

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