

CTA ADA Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 13, 2026

Members Present

Committee Chair: Laura Saltzman (in person)

Committee Vice Chair: Sara Luna (in person)

Committee Members:

- Cynthia Fosco (via Zoom)
- Barbara Padilla (in person)
- Dr. Delphine Labbé (excused absence)
- Milton Lash (in person)
- Johnny Gonzalez (in person)
- Giselle Núñez (in person)
- Sandra Fernandez (absent)
- Zoe Lanier (excused absence)
- Jada Thompson (in person)

CTA Facilitator:

- Irma Gomez-Fierro, Manager, ADA Compliance Programs

CTA Staff:

- Elsa Gutierrez, Vice President, Scheduling and Service Planning
- Molly E. Poppe, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer

Roll Call

Meeting called to order at 1:33 PM. A motion was made and approved to admit remote participants Cynthia Fosco for voting purposes. Committee achieved a quorum.

Announcements

Jada Thompson noted that April is Autism Acceptance/Awareness Month.

Lindsey Frey from CDOT attended the meeting in person to address questions related to roadway and sidewalk infrastructure.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the January 12, 2026 meeting were distributed to members prior to the meeting. No changes were requested. Barbara Paddilla moved to approve the minutes; Sara Luna seconded. Motion was passed.

Public Comments

One written public comment was received from Hillary P. The comment described a Blue Line service disruption between Grand and UIC Halsted stations. The commenter praised the train conductor's clear and repeated communication and noted that shuttle buses were available immediately upon exiting. However, she expressed disappointment that the shuttle Bus Operators failed to make stop announcements during the diversion. The commenter flagged this as an accessibility barrier, particularly for blind and low-vision riders, and called on CTA to

ensure all operators are trained in effective communication, especially when shuttle is making selected stops.

Operations' Customer Concern Process

Presented by: Randolph Williams, General Manager, Bus Operations (North Region); and Richard Porter, Vice President, Rail Station Management

Williams and Porter outlined the step-by-step process CTA Operations uses to receive, investigate, and resolve ADA-related customer complaints:

- Step 1 – Complaint Receipt: All complaints are received by CTA Customer Service, entered into the Customer Service database with all available details, and forwarded to the appropriate department and operating location (garage or terminal).
- Step 2 – Location Review & Employee Identification: The operating location initiates an internal review. Management identifies the employee involved and enters information into the TOPS system—a database used at both rail and bus locations to track complaints, accidents, and operational performance data.
- Step 3 – Manager Outreach to Complainant: When a valid phone number is provided, the investigation manager contacts the complainant directly to gather additional information and offer an apology for the negative experience.
- Step 4 – Video Review: The manager requests vehicle hard drive footage. RTBM (Real Time Bus Management) and AVAS (Automated Vehicle Annunciation System) are used to confirm the operator's identity and establish a clear timeline. On-board video does not include audio.
- Step 5 – Operator Interview & Written Statement: The operator is interviewed regarding the incident and required to submit a written response addressing the complaint.
- Step 6 – Determination & Corrective Action: After reviewing all evidence, the manager determines whether the complaint is validated. If so, corrective action is initiated, which may include coaching, retraining, or other measures. All documentation is filed upon closure.

Discussion highlights:

- Johnny Gonzalez asked whether vehicle video includes audio. Williams confirmed it is video only, with no audio. Gonzalez raised the possibility of using lip-readers to supplement video evidence. Williams deferred to department leadership. Poppe noted that lip-reading can produce inaccurate results and that the process already involves gathering information from the customer prior to interviewing the operator, along with video review, so multiple sources of evidence are considered.
- Chair Saltzman raised the issue of systemic complaints—particularly buses idling in or blocking crosswalks—where no specific time is documented. Williams explained that Bus Service Management (BSM) can deploy a supervisor to monitor and coach operators in high-complaint areas during relevant timeframes. Porter confirmed that for consistent complaints, supervisors are sent to observe and document patterns. Williams noted that communication gaps can occur due to large operator rotations and varying schedules, but CTA uses tab receipts and direct supervisor presence to reinforce expectations.
- Chair Saltzman described a specific instance near the Berwyn Red Line where crosswalk blocking was not resolved until she reported it using her name and title, despite prior complaints from the ward office and an anonymous complaint she had filed herself. She emphasized the need for a more equitable process that does not depend on

committee member intervention. Williams and Porter acknowledged the challenge and affirmed CTA's commitment to addressing systemic issues.

- Jada Thompson asked whether corrective training is tailored to the specific complaint type. Williams confirmed it is—for example, crosswalk blocking and failure to clear the wheelchair-accessible seating area require different training. Porter affirmed the same for rail-specific issues such as gap filler deployment.
- Chair Saltzman requested follow-up data on the percentage of complaints that are validated, and if possible, broken down by complaint type. Poppe confirmed CTA will follow up.

Innovation Studio Update

Presented by: Emily Drexler, Senior Manager, Customer Insights and Strategy; and Erik Jensen, Project Manager, Operations Innovation

Drexler and Jensen provided an update on CTA's Innovation Studio program, launched in 2023 to pilot new technologies that address operational challenges and improve rider experience. The program releases problem statements to external innovators from the private sector and nonprofits; successful proposals are piloted on the system, with a successful pilot potentially scaled into a longer-term solution. To date, eight problem statements have been launched, resulting in four ongoing projects, one completed project (finished in February 2026—the program's first completion), and one project currently in scope development. Three active areas were presented:

1. Right-of-Way Intrusion Detection

CTA launched a challenge to automatically detect people or large objects on tracks to enable swift intervention. Over ten proposals were received; two pilots were selected:

- STV/Derq Pilot: Uses an AI edge device installed at the station to detect intrusions. Pilot stations are Ashland (Green/Pink Line) and Cicero (Blue Line). A crash test dummy was used to generate sample and test data to calibrate the system prior to real-time use. In the pilot, a cellular connection added 20–30 seconds of latency, which would need to be reduced in a full deployment.
- Sensonic Pilot: Uses vibration measurement along a single optical fiber strand in an existing fiber optic cable. When the cable vibrates, changes in how light scatters through it can be detected using AI and digital signal processing to identify intrusions. A test fiber run was installed on the Forest Park branch from Racine to Western. In lower-noise environments, this technology has the potential to monitor significant lengths of track with a single device.

Key performance metrics: intrusion detection accuracy, response time, system uptime (target: “three 9s”—approximately 99.9%+), and false positive rate. The STV/Derq pilot achieved approximately 90% false positive suppression, equating to roughly one false positive per station per day. The vendor believes this can be improved further, which Jensen noted would be important at scale across CTA's 146 stations.

2. ePaper Displays at Bus Stops

CTA contracted with two vendors—Global Display Solutions (GDS) and Papercast—to pilot 20 solar- and battery-powered ePaper signs at bus stops citywide, providing real-time arrival information without requiring hardwired power. Currently, only approximately 400 of CTA's nearly 11,000 bus stops have real-time arrival information.

Sign features and specifications:

- GDS: Two 13-inch solar-powered screens—one requiring approximately 1 hour of sunlight, the other approximately 4 hours
- Papercast: 13-inch battery-powered screens and 23-inch solar-powered screens
- All signs include a text-to-speech button (with braille) enabling riders to hear arrival information read aloud
- Signs include a QR code linking to a rider feedback survey

Preliminary survey results: 95% of respondents like the signs a lot or somewhat; 93% agree they should be at more CTA bus stops. An Instagram reel of the installation garnered over one million views. Most signs remained online through winter; lower-power units briefly went offline during extreme cold but came back online as temperatures rose.

3. Mitigating Smoking on Trains

CTA is working with Chicago-based Sandbox Carbon to install activated carbon filters on eight 5000 Series rail cars, most likely on the Red Line, where most of the smoking complaints are received. Filters (four per car) would be installed at existing air intake points beneath seats, with a protective metal grade cover over the filter and return duct. Sandbox Carbon also proposed a sensor setup to continuously monitor HVAC airflow for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) associated with smoking and other combustion byproducts.

Key performance metrics: odor reduction time (how quickly VOC levels return to baseline after smoking), customer perception of odor, duration between filter changes (target: 60-day cycles, with filters designed to last approximately 80 days), time to swap filters in a rail yard, and air circulation reduction (ensuring filters do not impair heating or cooling).

Discussion highlights:

- Gonzalez asked whether a filter past its service life would take a rail car out of service. Jensen confirmed it would not—air continues to flow through spent filters; they simply stop absorbing odors.
- Cynthia Fosco (via Zoom) expressed gratitude for the simultaneous development of the audio/text-to-speech feature, noting its importance as a visually impaired person.
- Milton Lash noted he had seen one of the signs in Hyde Park and observed that some passersby didn't realize the display updates in real time. Drexler agreed public education would be important for a broader rollout. She also noted that the time displayed on the screen—which updates periodically—can serve as a cue that the sign is live.
- Jensen noted that the text-to-speech feature currently reads time in 24-hour format (e.g., 15:49) and the team is working on changing this to 12-hour format.
- Lash suggested deploying signs near Metra stations where CTA bus connections lack real-time information. Drexler invited specific location suggestions. Poppe noted that a multi-agency working group is already examining customer information and signage holistically across CTA, Pace, and Metra in preparation for the transition to Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA)- the new regional transit authority replacing RTA.
- Chair Saltzman recommended that CTA proactively notify organizations serving blind and low-vision riders about the audio feature on the ePaper signs, as the Papercast install had only been completed and riders may not be aware of the feature.

Camera Enforcement Pilot

Presented by: Angela Ng, Senior Project Manager, Transportation Engineering

Ng presented an update on the Smart Streets Camera Enforcement Pilot, authorized by Chicago's City Council in 2023. The pilot allows camera-based enforcement of parking violations on bus lanes, at bus stops, and bike lanes within a designated area. CTA's role is to provide automated detection via cameras installed on buses; the Department of Finance (DOF) reviews evidence and issues tickets.

Pilot Overview

- Original pilot area (8 sq. miles): Bounded by North Avenue, Ashland, and Roosevelt—covering 700 bus stops, 6.5 miles of bus lane, and 40 miles of bike lane. The first ticket was issued in December 2024, and the pilot is set to run for two years from that date (through December 2026).
- Expanded pilot area (as of March 2026): Now covers 19 sq. miles, with the northern boundary extended to Irving Park and the southern boundary extended to Archer Avenue and 26th Street—adding approximately 500 bus stops, 1.3 miles of bus lane, and 32 miles of bike lane.

CTA's Automated Bus Lane Enforcement (ABLE) System

CTA contracted with Hayden AI to deploy ABLE cameras on six buses operating on the #36 Broadway and #66 Chicago. Each bus is equipped with an onboard AI processor and two windshield-mounted cameras: a context camera and a license plate reader (ALPR—Automated License Plate Recognition). Unlike the city's system, in which human drivers in enforcement vehicles manually observe and record violations in real time, the ABLE system automatically detects violations. Evidence is uploaded to Hayden's server, reviewed by Hayden staff for accuracy, and then transferred to a shared portal accessible to both CTA and DOF. Only DOF can approve violations and issue tickets by mail. A public online portal allows ticketed individuals to view the evidence against them. CTA buses conduct enforcement seven days a week; city DOF vehicles operate Monday through Friday only.

Results to Date

City vehicles (November 2024–December 31, 2025):

- 44,390 total warnings and violations issued
- 75% were zero-fine warnings; 80% of recipients did not re-offend after receiving a ticket
- Less than 2% of violations were contested
- 40% involved non-Chicago license plates

CTA buses (October 15, 2024–end of March 2026):

- 13,106 total warnings and violations captured (includes expanded pilot area)
- From the warning period through December 31, 2025: 61% bus lane violations, 33% bus stop violations, 6% bike lane violations
- For the period November 14–December 31, 2025 specifically: CTA captured approximately 2,200 warnings and violations—58% bus lane, 36% bus stop, 6% bike lane (compared to the city's 3,600 violations—skewed toward 83% bike lane and 17% bus lane, reflecting the different routes and geography covered)

Accessibility impact: Among the 50 highest ramp-deployment bus stops in the original pilot area, an 18% decrease in violations was observed from December to February, corresponding to a 14% increase in bus enforcement hours. This preliminary finding indicates improved ramp access for wheelchair users at key stops.

Next Steps

- CTA plans to expand enforcement cameras to 94 buses across additional routes.
- CTA, CDOT, and DOF are required under the pilot ordinance to present a summary report to City Council four months before the December 2026 pilot expiration, including a recommendation for a permanent program.
- Ng noted the City is exploring additional violation types for camera enforcement, including crosswalk blockage and double parking. Hayden AI has indicated they can support these if authorized.

Discussion highlights:

- Gonzalez asked whether revenue is shared with CTA. Ng confirmed that all revenue currently goes into a general city pool and nothing is directed to CTA at this time, though this is being explored.
- Gonzalez noted that as CTA seeks funding to expand to 94 buses, routing revenue back to CTA could potentially help the program pay for itself. Poppe and Ng acknowledged the volume of DOF review work involved in scaling and the ongoing work with Hayden to reduce rejection rates to increase the approval rate.
- Chair Saltzman highlighted the ramp deployment data as a valuable and compelling metric for demonstrating the accessibility impact of protected bus lanes and encouraged its continued use.

Wayfinding Subcommittee Report

Presented by: Sara Luna (presenting in Dr. Labbé's absence)

The Wayfinding Subcommittee met on Friday, March 13, 2026. The meeting covered two main areas:

- CTA Website, Chatbot, and Feedback Form: Members had a lengthy discussion on accessibility concerns with CTA's chatbot and website, including difficulty locating the chatbot and other feedback methods. Discussion also addressed the need for more disability-inclusive language in chatbot responses—such as providing visual directions and explaining how to locate braille rail car numbers.
- System-Wide Accessibility Concerns: Members provided general feedback on accessibility issues throughout the system, including: lack of audible announcements on the Brown Line; train lines not announcing their route while in the Loop; confusing wayfinding signage; and difficulty understanding audible announcements in underground stations.

Facilitator's Report

Presented by: Irma Gomez-Fierro, Manager, ADA Compliance Programs

- Conducted 23 ADA training courses for frontline CTA employees.
- Attended Nexamp's Civic Design Lab, where CPS students designed solar-powered accessible bus stops.
- Attended the MOPD Summer Jobs Fair event, where over 150 students participated.
- CTA partnered for the second consecutive year with the Autism Transit Project. Local youth and young adults recorded public announcements reminding riders to stand behind the blue tactile edge and that mobile devices can be used to pay to ride.
- A new tactile signage contract was approved for production and delivery of approximately 7,000 remaining tactile bus stop signs to cover all CTA bus stop system-wide. Installation will take at least two years.

- Decals listing bus route and direction were added to 48 signs. The remaining 52 decals will be installed next month, completing a 100-sign pilot. The pilot will also evaluate how the sticker decals hold up over time across different weather conditions before a decision is made on broader expansion.
- CTA is launching a new rider survey focused on understanding the opinions, preferences, and needs of riders with disabilities. It will include comparable questions from the 2023 survey as well as new topics. The survey will go 'live' later in the week and will remain open through the end of May.
- A new Coordinator of Accessibility Services is scheduled to join CTA in late May and will connect individually with Committee members before the July meeting.

Old Business

No old business was raised.

New Business

Chair Saltzman raised the possibility of a joint meeting between the CTA ADA Advisory Committee and the Citizen's Advisory Board, given the transition to NITA related uncertainties.

Adjournment

Motion: Sara Luna

Second: Giselle Núñez and Barbara Padilla

Vote: Unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Next Meeting Dates:

- Monday, July 13, 2026
- Monday, October 5, 2026