

CTA ADA Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, July 8, 2024 ([Link to Video](#))

Members Present

Committee Chair: Laura Saltzman (in person)
Committee Vice Chair: Cyndi Fosco (in person)
Committee Members: Mary Abramson (virtual)
Doreen Bogus (excused absence)
Sara Luna (virtual)
Barbara Padilla (in person)
Johnny Gonzalez (virtual)
Sandra Fernandez (virtual)
Dr. Delphine Labbe (in person)
Lincoln Edwards (virtual)
Giselle Nunez (in person)
Jada Thompson (absent)

Facilitator: Irma Gomez-Fierro, Manager, ADA Compliance Programs

CTA Staff Molly Poppe, Chief Planning, and Innovation Officer
Elsa Gutierrez, Vice President, Scheduling and Service Planning

Notes:

- The July 8, 2024, ADA Advisory Committee meeting was conducted as a hybrid meeting. The public was able to listen to and/or view this meeting via YouTube and be present at CTA Headquarters.

Roll Call

- Roll call was taken by Cyndi Fosco and a quorum was established.
- Meeting members answered when their name was called and stated their affiliations, if any.

Announcements

- No Announcements

Approval of Minutes

- Barbara made a motion to approve the minutes from April 2024, meeting. Delphine seconded the motion.

Public Comments

- No Public Comments

All Stations Accessibility Program Update

- Presented by Steve Mascheri, Vice President of Capital Construction, along with Julian Silva (CDOT) and Rajiv Pinto (CDOT)
- Total projected budget: \$2.1 billion; Divided into 4 phases
 - Phase 1 expected completion: end of 2025; Phase 1 is fully funded
 - Phase 2 is partially funded and funded projects expected completion: end of 2026
 - Phases 3-4 are currently unfunded
- Austin Station (Green Line): Utility work started, expected completion by end of 2025
- California Blue Line Station: Final design package received, bidding expected this fall, construction to begin early 2025, completion mid-2026
- Montrose Blue Line: 60% design deliverable received, work to begin mid-2025, completion end of 2026
- State/Lake station: Bids under review, project led by Chicago Department of Transportation, expected to start later this year
- Irving Park and Belmont: In negotiations with designer, work to begin end of 2026, completion mid-2028
- Pulaski (Blue Line): Planning documents started, work to start 2027, completion early 2029
- Oak Park and Ridgeland (Green Line): Planning documents in progress, work to start 2027, completion mid-2028

Committee Questions:

- Laura Saltzman asked about the multiple elevator transfers required when moving from the State/Lake Red Line station to other lines at the State/Lake elevated station. She was concerned about the complexity of the transfers and why a more direct route wasn't possible.
 - Rajiv Pinto explained that the Red Line subway and the elevated L tracks are not in the same vertical plane, making it physically impossible to have a single elevator connecting all levels. He noted that the subway dips under

the L tracks, and the stations are offset horizontally, necessitating separate elevators and a transfer bridge.

- Mary Abramson inquired about the meaning of "temporary" in relation to elevator outages. She specifically asked if there's a difference between electrical and mechanical issues in terms of expected downtime. She expressed concern about the lack of clarity in communicating the duration of outages.
 - Steve Mascheri explained that the duration can vary based on the issue. He mentioned that they try to balance providing enough information without overwhelming users. For longer-term issues, they may relocate bus stops or provide alternative arrangements. He acknowledged the need for better communication on expected durations.
- Mary suggested more prominent placement of outage notifications and more clear information on expected repair times. This was particularly in reference to the Cermak/China-town station.
 - Mascheri agreed this was an area for improvement. He said they would look into making signage more prominent and providing more detailed information about expected repair times when possible. He committed to bringing this feedback to the maintenance team.
- Laura asked about the sidewalk conditions around the new and renovated stations, specifically inquiring if CTA had looked at ensuring accessible paths of travel around the stations.
 - For the Damen station, Rajiv Pinto confirmed that sidewalks are being redone with proper curb cuts and accessible features at all four corners of the intersection. For other stations in the ASAP program, Steve Mascheri noted that ensuring accessible paths of travel is part of the overall design and construction process.

[Red Purple Modernization \(RPM\)](#)

- Presented by, Jeff Wilson, Director, Community Relations – RPM
- Project Overview: The RPM project is divided into the Red-Purple Bypass area (from Belmont North to just south of Addison) and the Lawrence to Bryn Mawr Modernization.
- Scope: The project involves reconstructing six miles of track and four new ADA-accessible stations (Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, and Bryn Mawr).
- Bypass Completion: The Red-Purple Bypass, which segregates Red, Purple, and Brown line trains, was completed in 2021.
- Current Work: CTA is currently rebuilding the Red Line tracks between Belmont and Cornelia, with southbound tracks to be completed in 2025.
- Timeline: All four new stations (Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, and Bryn Mawr) will be open by the end of 2025.

CTA Wayfinding

- Presented by Tony Coppoletta, General Manager of Customer Information
- Bus Stop Sign Redesigns:
 - Implemented new bus stop sign designs with a more consistent reading order
 - Added bolder route number representation for better visibility
 - Included consistent color coding (red for express, neutral for local routes)
 - Improved readability by using mixed-case type instead of all caps
 - Experimenting with special sign types for long-term bus stop relocations, using high-contrast yellow backgrounds for better visibility
- Train Station Signage Improvements:
 - Focus on minimizing cognitive load and making navigation easier
 - Expanded use of pictograms to help with language barriers and cognitive disabilities
 - Implemented a careful information hierarchy, providing just the necessary information at each decision point
 - Added more prominent station identifiers to help spot stations from further away
 - Introduced new "out" signs with bright yellow high-contrast patches for better visibility
- Digital and Physical Integration:
 - Working on creating an integrated network of physical and digital signs
 - Ensuring consistency in design language across physical and digital platforms
 - Exploring how to incorporate the new wayfinding elements into future digital trip planners
- Stop Letter Identifier System:
 - Expanding the use of "lollipop" signs (discs with high-contrast large letters) at bus stops
 - These identifiers help spot bus stops from a distance and tie into station wayfinding
 - Particularly useful for making rail-to-bus transfers easier
 - System is already in use in some areas like the RPM project zone
- Continuous Improvement and Research:
 - Regularly reevaluating existing tools and looking to build on them
 - Studying other transit systems worldwide for best practices
 - Updating all printed and online publications for better accessibility and user experience
 - Developing new materials for accessibility, limited English proficiency, and new onboarding guides

Committee Questions:

- Delphine Labbe asked about wayfinding considerations for people with disabilities, particularly from outside the station and for bus connections.
 - Tony explained that for the new Damen station, the bus stop is directly in front of the station entrance. He mentioned that there's clear rail signage on all doors indicating where to enter. Tony noted that all CTA's rail signage will be integrated into the station design. He also pointed out that sidewalks around new stations are being redone with proper curb cuts and accessible features.
- Laura Saltzman inquired about improving signage for exiting stations, especially in temporary or reconstructed stations like Bryn Mawr.
 - Tony acknowledged that this was an area for improvement, especially in temporary stations. He committed to sharing this feedback with the team and reviewing the signage at specific stations like Bryn Mawr. Tony mentioned that they're trying to implement more wayfinding elements along the platform, similar to practices in other transit systems like London's.
- Barbara asked about the possibility of adding a menu at the top of the elevator status webpage for easier navigation.
 - Tony confirmed that there is already a menu where users can look up information by line. He explained that the screenshot shown was just an example and didn't show the full functionality of the webpage. Tony committed to looking into ways to make this feature more prominent or user-friendly.

Accessible Trip Planning and Chatbot Updates

- Presented by Liz- Liz-Lepiorz, Senior Product Manager, Customer Experience Innovations
- Accessibility Data Improvements:
 - CTA updated accessibility data for all rail stations in trip planning apps in March 2024 some apps that now show the change are Google Maps and Transit app.
- Bus Stop Accessibility Research:
 - CTA conducted a focus group survey with 9 wheelchair users to rate the accessibility of 11 representative bus stops.
 - The survey results aligned with CTA's internal classifications of "full access" and "limited access" stops.
 - This research is being used to improve the accuracy of bus stop accessibility data.
- Bus Stop Accessibility Data Publishing Options:
 - Presented four concepts for publishing bus stop accessibility data:

- No changes (status quo)
 - Only marking fully accessible stops
 - Marking all stops as either accessible or not accessible
 - A mixed approach, leaving some stops unmarked.
 - Each option was presented with potential impacts on trip planning and user experience.
 - Committee feedback was requested on these options, and which one would be most beneficial.
- CTA Chatbot Update:
 - Launched on April 24, 2024, on the CTA website.
 - Allows customers to report incidents in real-time and find information.
 - On average, handles 176 actionable incidents per week.
 - Most common topics: bus/train arrival times, smoking on system, and employee rudeness complaints.
 - The chatbot interface was designed with accessibility in mind, supporting screen readers among other features.
- Chatbot Success Stories and Next Steps:
 - The chatbot has enabled more efficient real-time customer service responses.
 - Some departments have modified their processes to better handle chatbot-reported feedback.
 - The real-time nature of reports has made it easier for staff to address and close out incidents.
 - CTA is monitoring and planning various improvements to the bot, including short-term and long-term fixes.

Committee Questions:

- Delphine Labbe expressed concern about potentially routing transit customers to less accessible stops, even if it's only 2% of cases. She emphasized the importance of providing the most accessible path first.
 - Lucien explained that they were trying to balance the needs of all customers, including those who currently use stops classified as "limited access". Committed to further consideration of how to prioritize accessibility in route planning.
- Laura Saltzman asked about sharing data on limited access bus stops with the committee.
 - Lucien agreed to share this information with the committee. Explained that they have internal classifications for bus stops, including "full access" and "limited access". Mentioned that this data was used in their recent accessibility survey.

- Mary inquired about the integration of accessibility considerations in the chatbot design process.
 - Lucien stated that accessibility was a key consideration from the start of the chatbot design process. Detailed that the interface fully supports screen readers. Mentioned that several committee members provided feedback during the March test period, which led to improvements in the chat window's accessibility. Noted that there's a specific ADA topic in the chatbot that's used about 18 times per week, mostly for bus operator feedback and reports about elevator outages.

Facilitator's Report

- Irma Gomez-Fierro, ADA Compliance Manager, read the facilitator report
- 27.7 million rides in May 2024
 - Weekday average reached 1 million for first time since pandemic.
 - ADA ridership: 4.3 million year-to-date, down 1% year-over-year
- Announced Better Streets for Buses Plan with five priority corridors.
- Launched Bus Vision Project to reimagine bus network.
- Conducted 22 disability awareness training sessions for frontline employees.
- Participating in Disability Pride Parade on July 20th along with some committee members
- Uploading weekly accessibility tip videos for Disability Pride Month in July that can be found on CTA's social media channels.

Old Business

- No old business

New Business

- Laura Saltzman mentioned that she provides an update at the Chicago Transit Board about topics discussed in these committee meetings. The Chicago Transit Board asked her to identify the committee's top three priorities.
- Committee members mentioned several areas of focus, including:
 - a. How CTA fits into the broader network of active mobility for people with disabilities
 - b. Wayfinding improvements, which have been a consistent topic in recent meetings.
 - c. The integration of CTA services with other city departments, particularly CDOT

- d. Improving communication about accessibility issues, especially for temporary situations during construction.
- Ms. Saltzman would send out an email for committee members to provide their thoughts on top priorities.

Adjournment

- Cynthia made motion to adjourn and Mary second; Meeting adjourned at 3:39 PM.