

# Chicago Transit Authority Circle Line Alternatives Analysis Study

## Screen Two Public Involvement Public Comments and Questions (Appendix)

12 February 2007

**Comment No: 213**

**Topic Area: 4, 5, 6, 13**

**Received via: Email**

I attended the community meeting on Tuesday regarding the circle line. I was unable to stay for the entire question and answer session, so I apologize if these questions were addressed. I am concerned about the impact that a bus lane would have on Ashland and on North Avenue. If the bus alternative is considered, would it eliminate the parking on Ashland or the center plantings? On North Avenue a bus line would be unacceptable. We have waited 15 years for the new North Av. bridge to widen the street to 2 lanes as it crosses the river. Eliminating one of those lanes would make North Av more of a traffic nightmare than it is already. Is it feasible technically and financially to build connection down North avenue underground (under the river?) Above ground connection I believe will very adversely impact a very attractive and therefore desirable shopping destination by making it a dark cavern. The impact during construction of anything above ground would be unacceptable.

I also question how the connection from Ogden and Division would be made to the North Av. redline station (or would it connect to the Division station instead?). Again the only plan that would not adversely impact the area/community is underground train lines. The area has finally started to have a pleasant streetscape which overhead rail lines would ruin and bus lane going to that intersection (North & Clybourn) would be impossible. I am also concerned that the final cost of what I believe is the only feasible alternative (underground trains - at least along the streets I am familiar with) will be prohibitive. I will fully support Ald. Matlak's referendum on the Nov ballot to require underground heavy transit in the 32nd ward.

thank you,

**Comment No: 216**

**Topic Area: 4, 6, 11, 18**

**Received via: Email**

As a 20 year resident of the North Side I can tell you residents will not silently watch continued "planning" dump more congestion and headaches onto North Avenue. The already highly taxed residents living south of Diversey and North of North Avenue can barely use their cars, ride their bikes or safely walk anywhere near North, Clybourn Sheffield and Halsted Avenues now. Thoughtless over development has created a nightmare with too many stores, too little sidewalk, no room for busses and traffic that is snarled every day of the week. In winter and during holidays it is highly dangerous.

The North Avenue bridge is finally being widened after years of promises just in time to handle the traffic of these new strip malls along North and Clybourn. Now two huge

Condo towers "SONO" have quietly flown under the radar. Squeezing bus lanes back into the mix makes no sense and creates a bottleneck all over again. Ald. Ted Matlak's 32nd Ward is not the only Ward affected.

The 43rd will no doubt have plenty to say. Ironically, CTA did not bring a public meeting anywhere near where the real problem will come -the Red Line Clybourn stop. I wonder why? If public dollars are used Section 103 will require more meetings and you will hear the same thing from everyone.....above ground it is a nightmare now. The only answer is subway connections.

**Comment No: 230**

**Topic Area: 4, 6**

**Received Via: Email**

I think this is a great project and I would like to place my vote for the HRT-Ashland Option for the following reasons:

I think the HRT alternative is much more appropriate for Chicago's urban environment, the BRT seems too much of a space hog and would be better suited to cities that are more spread out, LA, Phoenix.... I also think that it is more economical in the long-term to have a transit option that is compatible with the existing system rather than create a new transit type. It will give the CTA more long-term flexibility and should lower maintenance costs because of the economy of scale. It also gives allows for opportunities to share infrastructure with the existing system and create a full circle using the State St. subway. If we didn't already have a transit system, the BRT may be appropriate, but we do, let's expand on a good thing...

Imagine if the Orange Line was built with an alternative transit type and how limiting that would be now as you plan the circle line.

I think the Ashland alternative is better mainly because it creates the opportunity for a super-station at North/Clybourn which is an appropriate place for such a station.

**Comment No: 233**

**Topic Area: 3, 4, 13**

**Received Via: Email**

Here are my comments:

1. Link the North Side and West Side. There is no direct link from the North Side to West Side link in the CTA train system, and there should be. The Circle Line should run farther north and farther west than currently proposed.
2. Lay no small plans. This is going to be a huge project so let's do it right the first time. Have a long-term vision even if it's going to cost more.
3. Move the line away from the Loop to make transit times faster. The Circle Line needs to be farther from the Loop in order to truly save transit time. Considering that a trip from the Red to the Blue Line via the Circle Line will require two transfers with the attendant additional transfer time, it seems that a direct transfer from the Red to the Blue Line in the Loop may be very competitive time-wise -- even preferable. It may be faster to bypass the Circle line altogether on such a trip. This is unacceptable. The Circle Line has to be more competitive than that.
4. Please show the margin of error in the presentation materials. Without this information, the statistics are hard to trust.
5. Go north of North Ave. and West of Ashland. The current proposal is just a slightly larger Loop. This proposal puts more mass transit in the realm of rich neighborhoods that are already well served by the CTA.

**Comment No: 242**

**Topic Area: 4, 5, 11, 17**

**Received Via: Email**

This statement is on behalf of the Citizens for better planning. We are a new citywide community organization promoting good urban design. We support innovative and sustainable architecture for pedestrian- and transit-oriented developments, of appropriate density, that respect Chicago's unique urban fabric. A major factor of providing a well functioning urban environment is having an efficient, well run transit system serving the population. This is why our group is supportive of the proposed Circle Line.

We as a group believe the Circle Line should utilize Heavy Rail Transportation. We feel building the Circle Line as an extension of our existing rail system would be best for increasing ridership, capacity, efficiency and versatility of the CTA rail system as a whole.

We also are most supportive of the Ashland routing of the system rather than the Ashland-Ogden corridor. We believe the Ashland corridor through North Avenue will attract the highest ridership, serve more of the population and will attract more brand new transit oriented development, which increases tax revenue for our city, local shoppers for the neighborhoods, increases ridership and revenue system wide. This routing would provide all of these benefits at a minimal impact of additional traffic. The Ashland-Ogden corridor will pass through Goose Island designated a Planned Manufacturing District by the city of Chicago. Although employees from this district may use the new circle line, no additional development of other uses can be built here according to city zoning policy, which restricts future ridership growth along the line while bypassing the moderately dense Bucktown-Wicker Park community which is in need of faster, grade separated transportation to help alleviate and serve as an alternative to its already congested commercial streets. This routing would also provide a direct connection between Wicker Park and the popular North and Clyborn shopping area, reducing the need to travel on already congested North Avenue. Although frequent bus service already makes this connection, the route is slow and inefficient due to traffic and existing street conditions.

We also feel this routing will reduce the congestion and crush loads of other east-west bus routes such as Grand Avenue, Chicago Avenue and Division Street, used by riders commuting between the Streeterville, River North, Magnificent Mile, Old Town and Gold Coast areas and the existing Blue Line. These riders using the northwest branch of the Blue Line could use the Circle Line instead of buses to make their transfer, reducing bus loads and improving travel time by avoiding congested surface streets or by having to first travel into the Loop.

Lastly, we feel the improvements made to the CTA system by the addition of the Circle Line would better position our city for future growth, a strengthened downtown area, and hosting the 2016 Olympics should the event occur here.

We thank the CTA for the effort made in the planning of the Circle Line, and the program of public screenings, giving citizens an opportunity to comment.

**Comment No: 245**

**Topic Area: 4**

**Received Via: Email**

I am writing in support of the Ashland Avenue route for the proposed circle line. This route would have the advantages of:

1. Serving more neighborhoods because of its longer length.
2. Adding a new station near the vicinity of Chicago and Ashland thereby balancing the new non-interchange stations at Madison on the west side and Cermak and Blue Island on the near southwest side with a non-interchange station on the near northwest side.
3. Allowing the Metra UP-North and Northwest line inter-change stations to be placed approximately three miles from the terminal rather than a too close one mile near Chicago and Ogden. The interchange station near North, Ashland and Elston would serve the developing Elston avenue corridor.
4. Eliminating the need to construct an interchange station near Division and Orleans which is very close to an existing station at Clark and Division.
5. Creating an interchange station at North, Halsted and Clybourn, serving the existing and expanding Clybourn avenue commercial and retail corridor.
6. Eliminating the need for an additional tunnel under the Chicago River at Goose Island.

The Ashland route would create the most social and economic benefits along with providing for the easy transfer of passengers among connecting CTA and Metra lines. Because the Ashland route is longer it serves more neighborhoods with additional stations and has the most potential for generating additional CTA riders.

The Ashland/Ogden route would have a minimal potential on creating new rail riders and would only serve to facilitate the transfer of passengers among existing lines.

Both routes reflect the need for a station at Roosevelt Road to serve the existing and expanding need of the Illinois Medical District which includes many government and public facilities. This station should be constructed as soon as possible regardless of which circle line route is chosen

At the Screen Two presentations the factors in the evaluation of the routes were described as:

- a. capital costs,
- b. operating costs,
- c. ridership percent difference, and
- d. cost per boarding.

The *a*, *b* and *d* factors are inherently biased toward a shorter line that is less expensive to construct and do not attempt to measure other social and economic benefits ensuring that the shorter, less expensive option will prevail. The presentation did not indicate if the proposal to initiate enhanced rail service to the airports was a factor in the evaluation. If it was not considered then the CTA should reconsider all routes and consider which routes can efficiently and economically be integrated into proposals to enhance rail service to the airports.

I believe that of the two routes that the Ashland route will have the most favorable social and economic impact upon the city and will have the greatest potential for attracting new riders.

**Comment No: 257**

**Topic Area: 14**

**Received Via: Email**

Has there been any input from Metra about the CTA's Circle Line plans? I'm sure CTA's cost estimates and operating factors don't account for the cost to, and effect on, Metra operations; I don't think there were any identified Metra reps at the meeting. By eliminating any alignment north of North Ave, the plan would require a new Metra station be constructed on the extremely narrow Metra ROW at North & Elston, four blocks south of the existing Metra Clybourn Station; this would be a great expense and a construction nightmare for Metra.

And also create a schedule and operating problem for Metra by attempting to service two such close together stations with sometimes heavily loaded trains. Routing the north end of the Circle Line through Ashland / Armitage would allow use of the existing Metra Clybourn station, and allow Metra trains to continue making just one stop in the immediate vicinity.

The same on the BNSF, with existing stations at Halsted and Western, another station at Ashland would be a cost and operating problem for Metra.

And the BNSF ROW at Ashland/Paulina along 16th St would be a b\*\*\*h to fit a new station into (look at it from a Pink Line train and envision fitting a new Metra station in there, and how much it would cost). The Metra ROW is crowded at Ashland Kinzie also, with some Metra services stopping one mile away at Western Ave.

CTA is seeking to lower it's Circle Line implementation costs by utilizing as much existing CTA infrastructure as possible in the plan, are they looking out for their proposed partner in this venture - Metra- in the same way?

Without Metra having complementary stations and connections to the proposed Circle Line stations and services, the Circle Line loses a lot of its suggested benefits. I think there should be MUCH MORE input from Metra, besides just the public, as to what the Circle Line route alignment should be and where the connecting stations should be located.

**Comment No: 259**

**Topic Area: 4**

**Received Via: Email**

I certainly understand why the proposed North South Corridors have been whittled down to the three chosen but I am confused as to why alternatives to the East West connection on the South Side are not being considered or discussed. It seems to me that the Rail Corridor between 15th & 16th should be explored as an alternative to the most Southern portion of the proposed Circle Line connection which as proposed would have to cut thru a National Historic Register District in Pilsen. This rail corridor would connect the emerging Roosevelt Road Retail, the mid rise buildings being built or built between Ashland and Clark, as well as the tens of thousands of new residents who will be moving into that area as the Riverside District, South Water Market, University Station, University Village, the Pacific Garden Mission and ABLA projects, to name a few of the projects on the boards, come into their final stages.

This emerging high density population base is not adequately served by transport at this time and with all of the big box stores being built on Roosevelt the need for Transit access becomes even more critical.

This seems the perfect opportunity to add thousands upon thousands of new riders as well as create a good planning scenario for this major corridor going forward. I am not sure if the long range plan is to take the Pink Line down that corridor when the Circle Line is built and that is why this corridor is not part of the Alternatives study but I am quite disappointed that the only alternatives being explored are the main North South corridors. To ignore how the line goes from the West to the East is a major problem with the study.