

## Summer News Briefs

### Metra board gets new members

The Metra Board welcomed two new members at its May meeting. Paul C. Darley of Elmhurst was appointed by the Chairman of the DuPage County Board to replace Carole Doris as the board's DuPage representative. Darley is currently president and CEO of W.S. Darley & Co., a fourth generation family-owned business specializing in the manufacture of equipment for the firefighting industry. He also serves on the board of the Great Lakes Chapter of the National Defense Industry Association. Don A. De Graff of South Holland was appointed by the suburban members of the Cook County Board to replace Edward W. Paesel as the south suburban Cook County representative. De Graff has served as president of the Village of South Holland since 1994. In addition, he serves as the President of MB Financial Bank, Southeast Region. More complete biographies of Darley and De Graff can be found at [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com).

### Metra asks riders for their vigilance

Based on events that transpired in the Middle East last month, Metra is asking riders for their continued support and vigilance in our ongoing efforts to keep rail travel safe. Please remember, **"If you see something, say something."** That means if you observe anything or anyone suspicious, please contact any Metra personnel or call Metra Police at 312-322-2800. For more information about emergency preparedness and Metra's "See Something, Say Something" campaign, please go to [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com).

### Metra helps Make-A-Wish Foundation

A 7-year-old boy who loves trains got to experience a day of train-related activities thanks to the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Justin Bonny of Bolingbrook, pictured with his parents Kristin and Andrew in the front and Metra officials, including CEO Alex Clifford (second from left) in back, took Metra's engine simulator for a test spin, earned an honorary engineer's license and received a model Metra train with his name on it. He also visited Union Station, toured an Amtrak train and served as a Metra guest conductor.



### Meetings scheduled for 75th St. project

IDOT will host two public meetings concerning the CREATE 75th St. Corridor Improvement Project, which will eliminate bottlenecks and lead to more reliable service on the SWS line. Potential solutions may route SWS trains to LaSalle St. Station instead of Union Station. The meetings will be held from 4 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on June 7 at St. Rita High School, 7740 S. Western, and on June 9 at 1st Corinthian MBC, 7500 S. Halsted. For more info, go to [www.75thcip.org](http://www.75thcip.org).

Metra

# ON THE BI-LEVEL

Commuter Newsletter, June 2011

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& Listen  
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## Message from the Inspector General

Recent legislation designated the Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor (the "OEIG") to serve as Executive Inspector General for Metra and the



Ricardo Meza

other regional transit boards (RTA, CTA, and Pace). Effective July 1, 2011, our office will accept all complaints of misconduct relating to Metra and, when appropriate, we will open and conduct investigations. In addition, we will conduct all pending investigations, including those initiated by Metra's present inspector general, Hillard

Heintze, LLC.

For those unfamiliar with our office, we are an independent, nonpartisan state agency established in 2003. We have conducted hundreds of investigations in a fair and impartial manner and our efforts – as illustrated by the Executive Ethics Commission's decision in *Meza v. Erwin*, 11 EEC-005 – have exposed unethical conduct. In the *Erwin* matter, the misconduct related to prohibited political activities Ms. Erwin engaged in while serving as head of the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Our investigations have also uncovered various forms of misconduct, including benefit fraud, procurement and hiring improprieties, improper use of

state resources and time abuse. In addition, our responsibilities include monitoring state employment practices, overseeing employee ethics training, and issuing revolving door employment determinations.

Our experienced and professional attorneys, investigators, and paralegals are fully committed to honest government and the highest standards of public service. We believe we are well equipped to serve Illinois citizens as Executive Inspector General for Metra and the other regional transit boards.

We invite you to visit our website at [www.inspectorgeneral.illinois.gov](http://www.inspectorgeneral.illinois.gov) and encourage you to report misconduct, fraud, or abuse, related to Metra or any

other transit board click here. Complaints may be filed in a variety of ways, such as via our toll-free hotline (866-814-1113), TDD (888-261-2734), mail, in person at either of the OEIG's two offices, or via our website.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the OEIG will function as Executive Inspector General for Metra, please contact us at 32 W. Randolph St., Ste. 1900, Chicago, IL 60601, (312) 814-5600 or at 607 E. Adams St., 14th Floor, Springfield, IL 62701, (217) 558-5600

We thank Metra for publishing this message and look forward to serving the state in this new role.

Ricardo Meza  
Executive Inspector General

### CLIFF NOTES

## It's time to extend quiet to every Metra line

Things are about to get a bit quieter on your Metra train. We've decided to implement Quiet Cars on all 11 Metra lines starting on Monday, June 6. That decision comes after the successful three-month test of the concept on the Rock Island Line.



Alex Clifford  
Metra CEO

How much did Rock Island riders love the peace and quiet? In a quick survey we put on our website after the three months were

over, nearly 84 percent of those who responded said they were strongly or somewhat in favor of keeping the peace on their trains.

The biggest change as the program expands will be the location of the Quiet Cars. During the test, the first and last cars of trains were designated as the Quiet Cars. However, we learned during the test that those cars can be noisy due to their proximity to the train's bells and horns.

The Quiet Cars will now be designated as the second car from the locomotive and the second car from the other end of the train on all rush hour trains

with six or more cars, on all lines except the Metra Electric Line. If there are five cars or fewer on the train, only the second car from the locomotive will be a Quiet Car. And on the Metra Electric Line, only the third car from the south end of the train will be a Quiet Car. There will be no Quiet Car on two-car trains.

All Quiet Cars will be identified with decals on the outside of the car and signage inside the car. Quiet Cars will apply to all inbound trains arriving downtown before 9 a.m. and all outbound trains leaving downtown between 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

The rules remain the same: No cell phone calls. If you must answer your phone, you should make it brief or move to the vestibule or another car. Conversations between riders are discouraged; if you must talk to someone keep it short and use subdued voices. And if you're using headphones, make sure only you can hear them.

We hope all passengers will remember to treat their fellow passengers with courtesy and respect, no matter where they are sitting.

You can now follow me on Twitter @MetraCEO.

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# Metra

## On the Bi-Level

Published by Metra's Media Relations Department. Send letters, questions or feedback to On the Bi-Level, Metra, 547 W. Jackson, Chicago IL, 60661-5717. Or e-mail [onthebilevel@metrarr.com](mailto:onthebilevel@metrarr.com).

We can't guarantee all letters will be printed or answered. Please keep letters to less than 200 words and include your first name, hometown and what line you ride. (Names are not required but strongly encouraged.) We reserve the right to edit letter for length and grammar.

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Alex Clifford

## SOUNDING BOARD

Got a question? We've got an answer

### Clean the windows

In the past Metra has washed their train cars at least twice a week. I have noticed the cars that go out of the south side of Union Station are filthy. The windows and sides are covered in dirt and grime. People are starting to write messages in the dirty windows. Last time I saw cars being washed was last fall. Is this part of a cost-saving measure by Metra?

Richard

*We're sorry about the conditions of those windows. We had to replace the car washer in the BNSF yard, and the new one is now being installed. It should be ready soon. We ask for your continued patience and understanding.*

### Clean the cars

I am riding on car 7810 on the UP Northwest line heading into Chicago. It is the car next to the engine. I have been a daily Metra passenger for more than 10 years and have never known Metra to put a car into service in this condition. There is dirt all over the seats. I mean visible granules of what looks like soil and grit. This looks like one of the old cars that was recently "rehabbed," but someone missed cleaning this one before putting it into service. The passengers are cleaning off the seats before sitting on them. I wanted Metra to know because I believe that it generally makes an effort to keep the cars clean. There must be a gap in inspections or cleaning.

Terry

*Please accept our apologies for the condition of that car and our thanks for bringing it to our attention. You are correct that this is one of the rehabbed cars. What we think happened is that some of the material that was*

*used to sandblast the old paint and corrosion ended up in the HVAC system. It was unnoticed until the car went into service, and when the system was turned on the fans blew the material into the car. We've had UP clean the car and we've asked them to keep a close eye on things until there is no more evidence of the material being present.*

### Platform congestion

So today I was lucky enough to be on BNSF No. 1220 for yet another round of "switch problems" and got downtown late. As I'm with the herd heading into the station, I look to my left and see the entire south concourse is full of empty tracks. Then I hear a horn behind us and I see that, ONCE AGAIN, the dispatcher decided he or she just had to bring the next train in on the tracks sharing the platform with the one already full of people. When I finally got to the front of the line I looked to my right and saw that the right half of the south concourse was also empty. So with an entire train station full of empty tracks, what possessed the dispatcher to bring the train in on a set of tracks that already had a full platform?

Greg

*We're sorry about what happened. But track assignments aren't as easy as they may appear, particularly when trains are late, because the longer trains can only use certain platforms. Train 1220 arrived on Track 12 with a 9-car set. The next train to arrive CUS after 1220 was train 1226. Train 1226 normally becomes Train 1225, departing on Track 12. We did not want to make a platform change on 1225 because people were already cueing up for it, and therefore we put 1226 on Track 10 to expedite the flip and minimize confusion. 1220 did not*

*have anywhere else to go, because a 9-car set would not fit on Track 4 or 6, Track 8 was occupied with 1223, and Track 2 was saved for 1228, an 11-car set.*

### You think you're old?

Steve thinks he's an old-timer on Metra. According to his criteria, I'd be long overdue for the silver and gold medals, and approaching platinum. I wonder if Steve had even started grade school yet when I started my daily commute on what we now know as Metra Electric. Back in the mid-1970s we called it "the IC", and the cars we now call "old" still had that "new car" smell. Cars 1633 through 1666 were manufactured in the late 70s; I rode some of them on their maiden trips. Before they arrived, I'd occasionally get to ride some truly old cars – the green ones that were made in the 1920s. Steve's still a youngster in my book.

Clay

*Without trying to settle this contest, we'd like to recognize all our veteran riders. You've earned our thanks.*



### We still want you....

*...to download a QR-reader app to your smartphone and then scan this image with your phone's camera. You'll be taken to our "My Metra" page, where you can sign up to receive alerts about service issues on your line. It's fast, easy and convenient.*

# SOUND OFF

"...the snarky, snotty observations by Metra's customers about fellow commuters ... offer some of the best free entertainment around." - SouthtownStar, March 13, 2009

### To your health

I read the May "Sound Off" and the letter from James regarding the Hygiene Car. I have one more "car" to add: the Healthy Car. That's right, the one without the passengers who are hacking, sneezing, sniffing, Vicks Vapor Rub-encased, gasping, groaning and near death (the way they act). Then, when I get to work, I won't have to check to see if the person behind me coughed up a lung on the back of my coat.

Frank

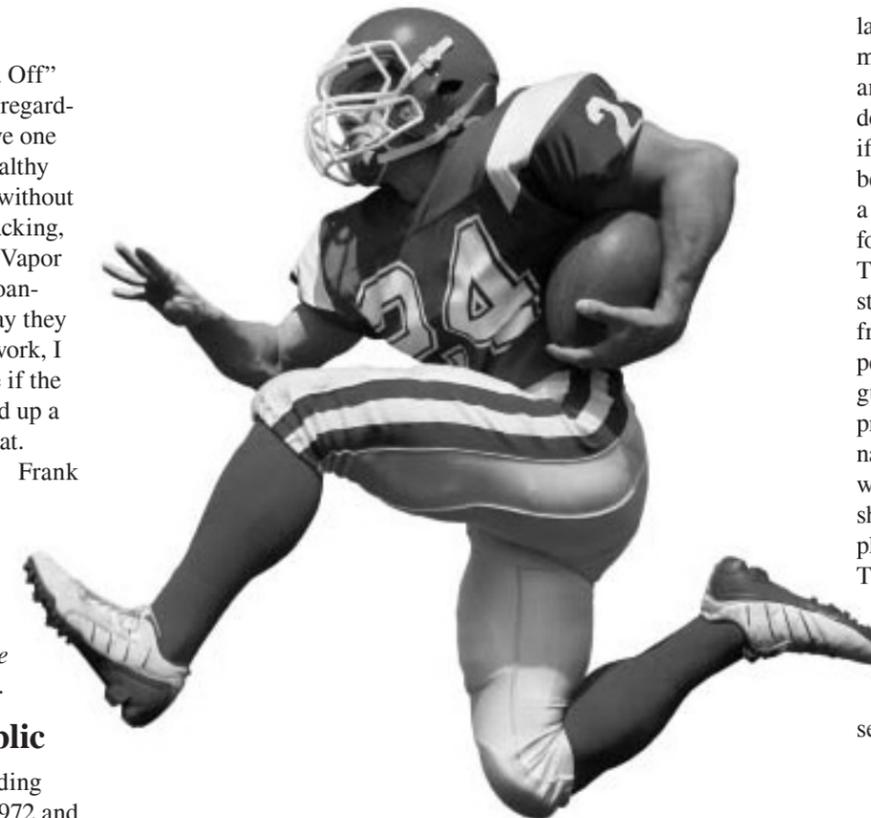
*OK, first of all that's gross. And second of all, if we keep up this segregation pretty soon everyone will have to have a whole car to themselves.*

### Hey, you're in public

I have actually been riding the Metra Electric since 1972 and thought I'd seen everything until today. That's when the woman sitting in the seat in front of me opened her purse and pulled out a stick of Secret deodorant. She then lifted up her blouse and proceeded to apply it to each armpit. I was shocked. She waited until we got to 55th Street to do this. For those who don't know the ratio, 55th Street is approximately 13 minutes from the Loop and she had already been riding for about a half-hour. Why she just didn't wait until she got to Van Buren to use the restroom is beyond me. This particular train was one of the older ones and does not have restrooms. No one was sitting next to her – Thank God!

Eileen

*So what you're saying is, she should have made a pit stop? (Sorry, couldn't resist.)*



### Running wild

To the large man who hit me with the speed and force of an NFL running back as he was running through the Ogilvie Station on the evening of April 14th – thanks for asking me if I was OK, saying sorry or even offering to help me up. You should count yourself among the fortunate that I wasn't an expectant mother or an elderly person, as the damage could have been greater than the bruised hip and swollen arm I received. I now submit to you that it's time for a new campaign for inside the commuter stations. Running for a train is dangerous, not only outside the stations when the gates are down, but when there are thousands of others trying to get to their trains without being tackled and injured. If you miss that train,

there will be another one.

Not NFL Material

*Maybe he was trying to score a good seat? ...All kidding aside, Ms. Material is right. Our rush to catch a train should not imperil fellow riders. Be careful out there.*

### You're in public, too

I have been riding the train for 18 years and have found that the vast majority of riders are considerate and polite. However, most of us have horror stories, too. In recent months a woman started riding the UP Northwest. Over time she has become increasingly annoying. When she first started riding she would spend most of the ride stretching and bumping into her neighbors without providing any apologies. Then several months

later she started putting on her makeup, which has turned into an everyday procedure. That doesn't sound too terrible, but if you were sitting next to or below her your coffee would get a nasty dose of powder. No need for creamer when she is nearby. The last straw came when she started clipping her nails. Nail fragments came out of her clippers like bullets from a machine gun. The poor people below her probably have remnants of her nails in their hair and coffee. CSI would love this woman because she spreads her DNA all over the place. Will her toenails be next? The total package scares the day-

lights out of me. As a result, I have moved to a different car. Any suggestions on how we should handle passengers like this? Please help!

Corky

*Maybe she'll recognize herself from your letter and realize that her behavior is best left to the privacy of her bathroom.*

### Another clipper

I was reading "On The Bi-Level" a couple months back and I remember a story about a guy clipping his nails. Well, I think he's back. I was on a UPNW train and a guy was clipping his nails! He was middle-aged sitting on the upper level, right side with his iPad, suit, and nail clipper. I think everyone on the upper level gave him a dirty look, but he kept going.

Christian

*If only there was just one Jack the Clipper. Unfortunately, there are too many riders who never learned what is and what is not appropriate train etiquette. They keep this column in business.*