



Metra, Sumitomo and Nippon Sharyo officials join workers at Nippon Sharyo's new plant in Rochelle, Ill., last month to mark the completion of the first two Metra Electric Highliner cars. The new cars could be carrying passengers as soon as November.

CLIFF NOTES

First Highliners roll out of new factory

The first new Highliner cars for the Metra Electric line rolled out of a new Illinois factory last month at a ceremony attended by hundreds of factory workers and officials from Metra, Sumitomo and Nippon Sharyo. We christened the first new car with champagne while workers looked on, snapped photographs and cheered.



Alex Clifford
Metra CEO

tract to build 160 new Highliner cars for Metra. That will completely replace the Metra Electric fleet. Spurred by the large Metra order, Nippon Sharyo built a sparkling new railcar plant in Rochelle, Ill., in the hopes of jump-starting a new railcar-building industry.

The factory already has brought jobs and economic development to Illinois, which funded the purchase through the state bond program. It's exciting to see something that benefits our riders also benefit the Illinois residents who provide us with funding

The first two cars are now



Metra officials try out the seats in the new Highliner cars at the Rochelle factory last month. They include (from left to right) Board Member Arlene J. Mulder, Chief Operating Officer Don Orseno, Board Members Jack Schaffer, Stanley C. Rakestraw and Brad S. O'Halloran and CEO Alex Clifford.

undergoing testing and should be ready for passenger service in November. Nippon Sharyo anticipates that in the first year four to six cars will be completed per month.

The new cars will have larger windows, better seats with reversible seatbacks, brighter

lighting, non-skid floors and an improved public address system. They will also have power outlets for customer use.

Half of the new cars also will have bathrooms. There will be at least one bathroom on every train, a first for the Metra Electric line.



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.

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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City's first railroad survives as Union Pacific West line

Most of this information is from an article in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society by Patrick E. McLearn, a history of the C&NW issued by the railroad in 1910, and David M. Young's 2005 book, "The Iron Horse and the Windy City."

The Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, which would become Chicago's first railroad and eventually form the Union Pacific West Line, was chartered in 1836, when U.S. railroading was still in its infancy and the population of the new town was only about 4,000 people.

Backers of the railroad sought a connection to the mineral-rich lands of northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin. As with capital projects even to this day, a lack of funding held up progress. The Panic of 1837 and subsequent depression dried up funding sources, and the project languished for a decade.

The push for the railroad was renewed by a group that included William B. Ogden, who had served as Chicago's first mayor from 1837 to 1838, and real estate developer Walter Newberry. They not only believed in the commercial promise of the railroad, but also thought if they built its Chicago terminal on the north side of the Chicago River, it would boost the value of land they owned there and halt the domination of commerce by owners of land to the south of the river.

They obtained the charter in 1847. But obtaining the funding was still difficult. Eastern investors were slow to back the railroad, and support from communities along the proposed route fell far short of the amount necessary to complete the entire length.

The decision was made to build what they could afford to build and hope the remaining funding would come through as construction progressed west. That plan succeeded.

Work began in the summer of 1848 and by that fall track had been laid as far as the Des Plaines River. On Nov. 20, 1848, a small second-hand locomotive named the "Pioneer" – which arrived in Chicago by boat, since there was no rail connection to the east – made a publicity run to what is now Oak Park pulling a couple of cars fitted with about 100 seats. On the way back, two passengers bought some wheat and hides from a farmer and the first goods arrived in Chicago by rail. (The "Pioneer" is now at the Chicago History Museum.)

The Galena & Chicago Union progressed west from the Des Plaines River to what is now West Chicago, where it turned northwest to Elgin, opening for business there in January 1850. The railroad was completed to Huntley, Marengo and Belvedere in 1851, Rockford in 1852 and Freeport in 1853. (The G&CU never made it to Galena.)

Some towns that were narrowly bypassed by the Galena & Chicago built their own branch lines to connect to that railroad. For instance, a branch was built from Aurora and Batavia to what is now West Chicago. That branch evolved into the BNSF line. In 1854, the G&CU was already working on a second mainline from the West Chicago area to Geneva, DeKalb and Fulton.

The G&CU's first downtown station in 1848 was near Canal and Kinzie, west of the north branch of the Chicago River. By

1853, there was a new depot at Kinzie and Wells, fulfilling the goal of having a terminal north of the Chicago River.

By 1855, the railroad started building a second track, which was completed to West Chicago by the end of 1857. The construction of the second track is thought to be responsible for the left-hand operation of the line.

When the line was built, most of the depots were north of the tracks. When the second track was added, it therefore had to go south of the existing track (or else the depots would have had to be moved). The track closest to the depots naturally became the inbound track, because most people waiting in the depots are heading downtown, and you don't want them to have to cross a track to board a train.

In 1864, the Galena & Chicago Union merged with the Chicago & North Western. Among the reasons for adopting the C&NW name for the combined company was that it more accurately described the range of the consolidated company – plus the fact that no part of the combined railroad reached Galena.

There was passenger service on the line almost from the beginning. The first passenger coach, built in Chicago for \$2,000, arrived in 1849. But true commuter service evolved over the years, influenced by events such as the Chicago Fire in 1871 (which made suburban life more appealing) as well as economic and demographic trends that factored in the growth of all suburbs.

We'll have more about Chicago & North Western history, including its 1995 purchase by Union Pacific, in future issues.



Front Row: Alyssa Meza (Bloomington), Manav Davis (Naperville), Yebin Park (Glenview), Manya Davis (Naperville) Olivia Ho (Glencoe), Emma Forman (Palatine), and Paola Arenas (Chicago). **Middle Row:** Ethan Chen (Green Oaks), Maria Guadalupe Garcia Eustaquio (Des Plaines), Christian Lee (Glenview), Kate Lee (Glenview), CEO Alex Clifford, Acting Chairman Larry Huggins and Jasmine Meza (Bloomington). **Back Row:** Metra Board Directors Stanley Rakestraw, William A. Widmer III, Don A. DeGraff, Paul C. Darley, Jack Schaffer, Mike McCoy, Brad S. O'Halloran, Arlene J. Mulder and Jack Partelow.

Schoolchildren win with safety contest

The winners of Metra's annual Safety Contest, designed to promote and reinforce railroad safety and keep children safe around trains, were honored at the September meeting of the Board of Directors.

This year's campaign drew record numbers with more than 5,500 students from nearly 250 schools throughout the region participating. (A full list of 2011-2012 contest winners can be found at www.metrarail.com).

Each year, Metra's Safety Contest invites students in grades K-12 throughout its six-county service area to submit poster and essay entries highlighting the importance of railroad safety. This year's contest theme was "Lead the Way: Look, Listen and Live." Tasked with selecting the winners were a panel of 20 judges, including government officials,

representatives from safety and education advocacy groups, business and community leaders, members of the media and Metra representatives. Additionally, more than 550 members of the public participated in the Safety Poster Contest "People's Choice Award" voting via the Internet.

"Nothing is more important to Metra than keeping children – and the public – safe," said Alex Clifford, Metra CEO. "I would like to commend each and every person who participated in the safety campaign for their leadership on this issue."

The first-place poster designs will be printed and distributed to more than 2,000 schools in northeast Illinois. The posters will also be featured in station displays, in Metra's 2012 safety calendar, on monthly tickets and on Metra's contest website and

Facebook page. Winning safety essays will also be featured in the safety calendar, the Metra contest website and Facebook page as well as in additional safety materials.

First-, second- and third-place winners were chosen from each grade level for the Metra Safety Poster Contest. One winner from each grade group – elementary school, middle school and high school – was chosen for the Safety Essay Contest. First-place poster and essay contest winners received an iPad, while second- and third-place poster contest winners received \$250 and \$100 gift cards, respectively. The "People's Choice Award" winner received a \$250 gift card. Metra also recognized the school with the most entries submitted in the poster contest. The top participating school, Robert Crown

Elementary School in Wauconda, will receive a computer.

The annual contest would not be possible without the support of its sponsors, whose generous contributions have helped Metra defray the costs of the contest prizes as well as the production of the safety posters. This year's contest sponsors include the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and Hubbard Radio Group, owners of Chicago radio stations 97.1 FM The Drive, 100.3 Chicago's Rewind and 101.9 The Mix.

The 2012-2013 contest has already started, with the theme "Take Care, Be Aware: Look, Listen and Live." Prizes will be the same as last year. Entries will be accepted until March 15, 2013. Please go to our website, www.metracontest.com, for full details about how to enter.

Changes ahead for Link-Up, PlusBus customers

Metra riders who use a Link-Up or PlusBus sticker to pay for their connections to the CTA or Pace need to know that on Dec. 1, the stickers will be replaced with magnetic-swipe transit cards. CTA and Pace will no longer accept the stickers after that date. The cards are easy to use: simply insert them into the bus fare payment machine or CTA turnstile and then remove them to pay for your connecting trip.



Rush, White Sox and Metra dedicate mural commemorating African-American players

Congressman Bobby Rush and officials from the Chicago White Sox and Metra last month dedicated a new 40-foot mural at the Lovana S. "Lou" Jones/35th St. Station that commemorates and pays tribute to the impact of African Americans on baseball on Chicago's South Side.

The mural was commissioned by the Chicago White Sox at the special request of Congressman Rush. It was painted by Chicago artist Billy Jackson with the support of local students. The Illinois Institute of Technology kindly donated work space for the mural painting. The artwork was placed under the Metra viaduct on the north side of 35th Street, which is just steps away from U.S. Cellular Field.

"The players in the segregated Negro Leagues along with

those who broke the color barrier are portrayed in this mural," said Congressman Rush. "They are all heroes whose life stories remind us of the power of sports and baseball in particular to bring us together. I am proud of this magnificent piece of public art."



Billy Jackson
Mural artist

Jackie Robinson and our very own Minnie Minoso have played in creating the game we all know and love – baseball," said White Sox Executive Vice President

Howard Pizer.

The mural features an historical South Side timeline, covering the Negro Leagues, the integration of baseball, legendary African-American White Sox players, the 2005 World Series champion White Sox and the future of African Americans in the game.

Historical baseball and societal figures in the painting include Rube Foster, Jackie Robinson, Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Minnie Minoso, Harold Baines, Frank Thomas, Jermaine Dye, Sam Hairston, Bob Boyd and Al Smith.

Chicagoan Billy Jackson is a 26-year-old emerging creator of public art, with the White Sox-Negro Leagues mural project as only his second large-scale public work.



White Sox great Minnie Minoso was on hand last month for the dedication of a mural that features him as well as other notable African-American baseball players.

Metra makes pitch for safety

Metra and the Chicago White Sox worked together at the Sept. 26 game against the Cleveland Indians to promote safe behavior around trains and tracks.

Metra and White Sox representatives passed out safety literature, pencil kits and coloring books to children attending the game, and the White Sox aired a public service announcement about railroad safety featuring Metra CEO Alex Clifford just before game time. Clifford also

threw out the first pitch (see photo at right).

We also put in a plug for the next edition of our Safety Poster and Essay Contest for area schoolchildren. This year's theme is "Take Care, Be Aware: Look, Listen and Live." Go to www.metracontest.com for all the details.

In addition, Metra employees donated money and presented a check at the game to White Sox Charities.



Photo courtesy of Chicago White Sox/Ron Vesely