

2023

cta historical calendar

celebrating



years
of cta



A two-car set of Pullman 2000-series cars is posed for this photo on the Lake Street elevated tracks at Canal, just west of the Chicago River. Originally delivered in mint green and alpine white livery, these cars sported a special color scheme in honor of the nation's Bicentennial.

January 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	D	E	F	G	A	B
1 New Year's Day	2 New Year's Day observed	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	December 2022 S M T W T F S 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		February 2023 S M T W T F S 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	
						ABCDEFG: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed



Following CTA's acquisition of the Chicago Surface Lines in 1947, a program was initiated to replace Chicago's fleet of largely well-worn streetcars with buses. In 1948, the Brill-built streetcars assigned to the 69th Street car house were replaced with General Motors buses.

February 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
				C	D	E	F
			1	2	Groundhog Day	3	4
F	G	A	B	C	D	E	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
E	F	G	A	B	C	D	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
D	E	F	G	A	B	C	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
C	D	E					
26	27	28	January 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		March 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		ABCDEFG: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed



A Pink Line train is seen here on June 24, 2006 near Polk, on the inaugural day for the new Pink Line route. The Cermak Branch was previously part of the Blue Line, but after a major renovation saw more frequent service as its own routing up via Lake Street 'L' and onto the Loop as a part of a set of improvements that also increased frequency on the Forest Park branch of the Blue Line.

March 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S			
February 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	April 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	ABCDEF G: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed	1	2	3	4			
	B ●		C	D	E	F	G	A	●
5	6	7	8	9	10	11			
	A ●		B	C	D	E	F	G	●
12 Daylight Saving Time begins	13	14	15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18			
	G ●		A	B	C	D	E	F	●
19	20 First day of Spring	21	22	23	24	25			
	F ●		A	B	C	D			
26	27	28	29	30	31				



Bus #7003 was one of the first of 20 “Big Bend” articulated (7000-series) buses delivered to the CTA from Maschinenfabrik-Augsburg-Nuremberg (M.A.N.) of Munich, Germany. Here it is posing for a photo with “cta Spirit of Chicago” destination signs in front of Soldier Field in 1979.

April 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
March 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	May 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	ABCDEFG: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed				E ● 1
E ● 2 Palm Sunday	3	F 4	G 5 Passover begins	A 6	B 7 Good Friday	C 8
D ● 9 Easter Sunday	10	E 11	F 12	G 13	A 14	B ● 15
C ● 16	17 Tax Day	D 18	E 19	F 20	G 21	A ● 22
B ● 23	C 24	D 25	E 26 Administrative Professionals' Day	F 27	G 28	A ● 29



The dream of extending 'L' service to O'Hare began to become reality in February 1970, when the existing Milwaukee elevated line was extended via subway and expressway median from Logan Square to Jefferson Park. This shows the new Belmont subway station two months after opening.

May 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
		B	C	D	E	F	G
	1	2	3	4	5	Cinco de Mayo	6
G		A	B	C	D	E	F
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
F		G	A	B	C	D	E
14	Mother's Day	15	16	17	18	19	20
E		F	G	A	B	C	D
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
D		E	F	G		D	
28	29	30	31	April 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30		June 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	ABCDEFG: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed
	Memorial Day						



Beginning in 1974, CTA began repainting many of its buses and trains in a special paint scheme to commemorate our nation's Bicentennial in 1976. Early in the program, the vehicles were named in honor of various patriots and events during the American Revolution. Later on, additional vehicles were painted in a modified paint scheme with the logo, "I Will-The Spirit of Chicago." Here bus #9040, part of CTA's largest single order of diesel buses from one builder, participates in a Chicago parade.

June 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
May 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	July 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	ABCDEF G: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed		1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



After 20 years, a new stop along Chicago's iconic Loop 'L' opened August 31, 2017. The Washington/Wabash Loop Elevated station is the newest, accessible CTA rail station in Chicago. It is served by the Brown, Green, Orange, Pink and Purple Express lines. This extraordinary rail station, which features a sleek, modern design and a signature platform canopy that is uniquely beautiful – replaced the two adjacent, century-old stations on Wabash at Randolph and Madison (closed/demolished 2015), to better meet the needs of today's transit riders.

July 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
June 2023 S M T W T F S 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	August 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	ABCDEF G: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed				F ●	
	F ●	G	A ● ▼	B	C	D	E ●
2	3	4 Independence Day	5	6	7	8	
	E ●	F	G	A	B	C	D ●
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
	D ●	E	F	G	A	B	C ●
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
	C ●	D	E	F	G	A	B ●
23	24						
30	31	25	26	27	28	29	



In 1971, the CTA received funding for a major capital improvement program that included the purchase of air-conditioned buses. In order to obtain input from its customers, the CTA sent two specially designed "Suggestion buses" around town to gather opinions about the design of the interiors of the buses, such as color scheme and types of seating.

August 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
			D	E	F	G	A
		1	2	3	4	5	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
	G	A	B	C	D	E	F
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
	F	G	A	B	C	D	E
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
	E	F	G	A	B		
27	28	29	30	31	July 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		September 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30



Just before the official inauguration of “Skokie Swift” service on April 18, 1964, customers were treated to free rides on the new express operation from Howard to Dempster/Skokie. Double-ended, 1-50 series cars from the St. Louis Car Company were used for the service, which required pantographs for overhead power west of Skokie Shops. These cars operated for almost 30 years until they were replaced by 3200-series cars from Morrison-Knudsen.

September 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
ABCDEF G: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed	August 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	October 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31			1	2	
D ●		E ● ▼	F	G	A	B	C ●
3	4 Labor Day	5	6	7	8	9	
C ●		D	E	F	G	A	B ●
10	11	12	13	14	15 Rosh Hashanah begins	16	
B ●		C	D	E	F	G	A ●
17	18	19	20	21	22	23 First day of Autumn	
A ●		B	C	D	E	F	G ●
24 Yom Kippur (eve)	25	26	27	28	29	30	



This photo shows the shiny, new Damen entrance to the Medical Center (now Illinois Medical District) station in 1958, when it opened. The station is on what was called the Congress Line—after the Congress Superhighway, whose median down which it was built—was the first implementation of this novel and innovative model for rapid transit. This branch of the 'L' system is now known the Forest Park branch of the Blue Line.

October 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
	G •	A	B	C	D	E	F •
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
F •	G	A	B	C	D	E •	
8	9 Columbus Day	10	11	12	13	14	
E •	F	G	A	B	C	D •	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
D •	E	F	G	A	B	C •	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
C •	D	E					
29	30	31 Halloween					

ABCDEF G:
 CTA Operations Division Group Days Off
 ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day
 • Central offices closed

September 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

November 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



A pair of 2400-series railcars in a special preview in August of 1976 pose for a photo on the Dan Ryan Connector at 18th/Wentworth (on the north end of the original Dan Ryan Line routing to 95th, before trains were rerouted into a new subway connection near Chinatown). Orange Line trains now pass just behind here on tracks that were added to connect its new route to the system in 1993—and more, we’re currently working to extend the south end of the Dan Ryan line further, to reach 130th Street.

November 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
ABCDEF G: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed	October 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	November 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	1	2	3	4
● B	● C	● D	● E	● F	● G	● A
5 Daylight Saving Time ends	6	7	8	9	10 Veterans' Day observed	11 Veterans' Day
● A	● B	● C	● D	● E	● F	● G
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
● G	● A	● B	● C	● D	● E	● F
19	20	21	22	23 Thanksgiving Day	24	25
● F	● G	● A	● B	● C	● D	● E
26	27	28	29	30		



Here we have an unusual scene with CTA Heritage Fleet cars 6711-12 seen trying out new track as part of a training and car testing tour leading up to our 75th Anniversary events! The train is passing over the (typically 4-track, though currently under reconstruction) North Side Main Line at Clark Junction on its way to the Ravenswood Branch. This new flyover, the Red-Purple Bypass, untangled this busy century-old junction so trains no longer cross each others' paths, leading to delays and rippling effects that limited capacity and prevented the addition of more service, particularly on the Red Line.

December 2023



S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
ABCDEF G: CTA Operations Division Group Days Off ▼ Alternate day off if you work on this day ● Central offices closed	November 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	January 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31			1	2	
E ●		F	G	A	B	C	D ●
3	4	5	6	7 Hanukkah begins	8	9	
D ●		E	F	G	A	B	C ●
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
C ●		D	E	F	G	A	B
17	18	19	20	21 First day of Winter	22	23	
B ●		C ▼	D	E	F	G	A ●
24 Christmas Eve	25	26 Kwanzaa begins	27	28	29	30	
A ●	Christmas Day						
31 New Year's Eve							

Historical notes



January

A two-car set of Pullman 2000-series cars is posed on the Lake Street elevated tracks at Canal, just west of the Chicago River. Although these cars look new thanks to their newly-painted fresh appearance, they and their counterparts have already seen close to a dozen years of service since being introduced in 1964. The 2000's were the last order of rapid transit cars built for the 'L' by the Pullman-Standard Company on the South Side of Chicago in the historic Pullman neighborhood, home of the once giant Pullman Palace Car Company. As originally delivered, these 180 cars sported a livery of mint green and alpine white. However, in the early 1970s, they were repainted into a platinum/silver mist color with a charcoal band through the windows to better harmonize with the all-stainless steel 2200-series cars delivered five years after the 2000's. Beginning in 1974, a few, such as this set, sported a special Bicentennial color scheme of silver with red, white, and blue trim, saluting the United States' 200th anniversary in 1976. The cars pictured here, unit 2175-2176, were the first Bicentennial cars created, named "Ben Franklin" and renumbered 1776 (both cars sharing the number). Subsequent Bicentennial cars would keep their original fleet numbers. The 2000's featured large picture windows, light blue cushioned vinyl seats, white interiors, grey flooring, and were the first fleet of rapid transit cars for CTA equipped with air conditioning. They also continued the use of blinker-type passenger doors that was first introduced in the 5000-series (1946) and 6000-series cars that succeeded them. The cars were equipped with 100 horsepower motors and 28-inch diameter wheels, which provided high speed capability. First put in service on the Lake elevated line serving the city's West Side, the 2000-series cars were then used on the new Dan Ryan Line when it opened and was through-routed with the Lake Line in 1969; they also saw years of service on the Howard-Englewood-Jackson Park, Milwaukee-Congress-Douglas and Evanston lines, before their retirement in 1994. Four cars of this series, cars 2153 and 2154 and 2007-2008 repainted and renumbered as 1892 and 1992 for the South Side 'L' centennial, are preserved at the Illinois Railway Museum in Union, IL. The city skyline of 1976 appears a lot different than as it looks today. Seen at the left is the Merchandise Mart, built in 1930 as a center of furniture and home furnishings showrooms, and is considered to be the largest building of its type in the world. Its exterior is still showing the grime caused by generations of coal burning used in the heating of the downtown buildings. Peeking over the top are the twin antennas of the John Hancock Building, which was, at the time of this photo, the world's tallest building. The towers of Marina City can be seen at the right.



February

Following CTA's acquisition of the Chicago Surface Lines in 1947, a program was initiated to replace Chicago's fleet of largely well-worn streetcars with buses. The Brill-built streetcars assigned to the 69th Street car house were replaced with General Motors buses in 1948 – the buses had actually been ordered by the Surface Lines but delivered after the CTA takeover. 69th/Ashland car barn, where this photo was taken, was closed in 1995 and demolished in 1998, replaced by the new 74th Garage. This photo represents a bittersweet era in Chicago's transit history. Streetcars were an integral part of the Chicago scene since the first horse drawn streetcars in 1859. As new technologies were developed, Chicago established a cable car system and, later, an electric streetcar system. In the 1930's, the Chicago Surface Lines, a predecessor to the CTA, was considered to be the largest streetcar system in the world, with more track, streetcars, and passengers, than any other street transit company. However, with the increasing popularity of the automobile, ridership began to slip and the operating equipment and infrastructure continued to age. While the new buses were sleek and modern, their passenger capacity did not match that of the streetcars they were replacing, thus requiring more buses to operate the routes to serve the passenger loads.



March

The Chicago Transit Authority's Pink Line rail service began Sunday, June 25, 2006 at 4 a.m., providing more frequent service between Cicero's 54th/Cermak station and the Chicago Loop. At the time, more frequent service on the Forest Park branch of the Blue Line also began. CTA created the rail enhancements as part of a package of service improvements focused on the West Side and near west suburbs.

The new Pink Line was created to connect the former 54th/Cermak Blue Line to the Loop via a restored section of track known as the Paulina Connector. The 54th/Cermak branch of the Blue Line served customers along Cermak Avenue, turned near Paulina and joined the Forest Park branch along the Eisenhower Expressway to travel into the Loop through the Dearborn subway.

Instead of traveling through the subway, the Pink Line service rerouted 54th/Cermak trains to the elevated tracks using the rehabilitated track near Paulina Street. Trains travel along Paulina via the connector tracks and join the Green Line at Lake Street to travel into the Loop in a clockwise direction on the elevated track.

Historical notes

This reroute was designed to provide customers with increased and faster service. Direct service to the Loop elevated also means enhanced connections to the Orange, Brown and Green Lines, Purple Line Express service and Metra.

The Chicago Transit Board selected pink as the color for its new experimental rail service from more than 500 entries submitted by Chicagoland area students from kindergarten through eighth grade. Participating students were asked to nominate a color for the new line along with an essay explaining their choice and speaking to the importance of transit service to their community.



April

Bus #7003 was one of the first of 20 “Big Bend” articulated (7000 series) buses delivered to CTA from Maschinenfabrik-Augsburg-Nuremberg (M.A.N.) of Munich, Germany, when it was shown making test trips in 1979—in this case posing for a photo in front of the pre-renovation Soldier Field.

Another 125 (7100 series) M.A.N. buses were purchased in 1982, making up the only other CTA order for new articls until the arrival of the first of 226 low-floor (7500 series) models in 2003. Today, CTA has about 300 60-foot articulated buses from 2008 and 2012 made by New Flyer as part of its overall modern, low-floor, accessible, air-conditioned fleet of approximately 1,800 buses (mostly 40’ models from Nova Bus and New Flyer, as well as some new all-electric-propulsion, fast-charging buses from Proterra).



May

The dream of extending ‘L’ service to O’Hare began to become reality in February 1970, when the existing Milwaukee Avenue branch of the West-Northwest route (now the Blue Line) was extended via subway and expressway medians from Logan Square to Jefferson Park.

This photo, taken just two months after it opened, shows the Belmont station on what is now the O’Hare Branch of the Blue Line, with two Douglas-Milwaukee “B” trains berthed in the station. The station opened on February 1, 1970 as part of a new subway to connect the Logan Square ‘L’ (opened in 1895) to the new expressway median line in the Kennedy. CTA would later extend the line to Chicago-O’Hare International Airport (ORD).

Stations on the original Kennedy (out to Jefferson Park) and Dan Ryan (Cermak-Chinatown to 95th/Dan Ryan) lines, including this modern, cavernous subway station—and the aesthetics of these then-new 2200-series railcars on the left of this photo on the northbound track—were designed by famed Chicago architecture firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, known for its application of International Style architecture. Note the similarities between the arc of the top of the roofline of these new train cars and its similarity to the arc of the roof further into the station.

This same year, the now-iconic John Hancock Center would open, just three years before the Sears Tower (1973, now Willis Tower) would open, both also the work of SOM.

On the right, a train of older 6000-series railcars, built by CTA in the 1950s, shows a stark contrast between older ‘L’ equipment and modern, high-performance cars with modern amenities like bright, fluorescent lighting and air conditioning.



June

Beginning in 1974, CTA began repainting many of its buses and trains in a special paint scheme to commemorate our nation’s Bicentennial in 1976. Early in the program, the vehicles were named in honor of various patriots and events during the American Revolution. Later on, additional vehicles were painted in a modified paint scheme with the logo. “I Will-The Spirit of Chicago.”

Here bus #9040, a 1970s General Motors “New Look” bus, part of CTA’s largest single order of diesel buses from one builder ever (600 buses!), participates in a Chicago parade. GM New Look buses were a family of similarly-styled buses that replaced their older style bus in the late 1950s and continued in production into the 1970s. They and were often playfully referred to in the industry and by transit enthusiasts as the GM “fishbowls” due to its large, protruding windshield shape.

According to Wikipedia, more than 44,000 were built in the US and Canada of various generations over time as the New Look model evolved, including electric trolley bus versions.

Historical notes



July

The Washington/Wabash CTA station replaced two century-old stations at Madison and Randolph with one modern, fully accessible station with wider platforms and a beautiful architectural design. The new station was designed with updated platforms, a new mezzanine and featured several modern amenities including elevators, an escalator, real time train arrival information, and security monitoring equipment.

Materials for the undulating wave form of the station canopy was chosen to allow visibility, reinforce the feeling of openness and to allow a visual connection to the historic Wabash corridor. The vibrant new facility opened for service in 2016 to enhance passenger convenience, improve train speeds, decrease operating costs and provide accessibility for all riders.



August

In 1971, the CTA received funding for a major capital improvement program that included the purchase of air-conditioned buses. In order to obtain input from its customers, the CTA sent two specially-designed “Suggestion buses” around town to gather opinions about the design of the interiors of the buses, such as color scheme and types of seating.

In addition to modernizing its bus fleet (this bus appears to be a Flexible propane bus from the 1950s) you can also see that CTA had moved into an overall era of modern design (starting with the Kennedy and Dan Ryan lines’ construction and signage systems that are the core of what our system is based on today). Here, you can see the embracing of modernism with text using Helvetica sans-serif type, neatly spaced and aligned as a movement toward “Swiss Style” or the “International Typographic Style” design swept through media, advertising and government institutions to present a modern, efficient, organized identity that is attractive and approachable. This was a sort of sea change in public design, moving away from stodgy serified, blocky or overly ornate typefaces for styles that are clean and neat—and reassuringly calm and readable.

CTA’s design styles, signage system and corporate identity continue to embrace this design tradition as it went from new to classic to classically hip and widely embraced, again.

Famous brands that share this familiar design DNA (often with ranging effect, depending on how it’s implemented, from sturdy and reliable to hip and fashionable, even edgy) include such familiar names as American Airlines, American Apparel, Panasonic, Lufthansa, NARS, Jewel-Osco, Target, Knoll, Scotch, Crate & Barrel and more, but it also became pervasive for its neatness.

Styles of a similar feel and voice to our own can be found in other iconic design systems for transit over the years such as at MTA New York City Transit (particularly in the signage of the New York City Subway system), the Washington DC Metro (WMATA), British National Rail, the Milan Metro and more!

September



The Skokie Swift opened to the public on April 20, 1964, with service from Dempster to Howard, after an inaugural train operated for a few hours on April 18, 1964. The Swift service was developed as a joint “demonstration project” between the CTA, Village of Skokie and the federal government to demonstrate the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of linking fast-growing suburban markets with an existing central city using rail transit. The pilot service included many features common today, such as the provision of a large park and ride lot, commuter drop-off/pick-up areas, close integration with area bus services and limited stop rail operation.

The Skokie Swift became a permanent and integral part of the CTA ‘L’ system and was renamed the “Yellow Line” in 1993, following the CTA’s assignment of color names to all ‘L’ routes. It has continued to use the distinctive “Swift bird” icon that has branded the line since its inception. Brand new cars were assigned to the line in 1994, and more recently the CTA’s newest generation of rail cars, the 5000-series, have been assigned to the line, providing customers with a smooth, comfortable ride.

The Oakton-Skokie station, the Yellow Line’s newest station that opened two years ago this coming Wednesday next to the Illinois Science and Technology Park, saw a jump in average weekday station entries to 833 from 756. Oakton-Skokie is the second station on the Yellow Line, which runs from Dempster Street, Skokie to Howard Street, where customers can transfer to the Purple or Red lines.

Historical notes



October

This photo of the shiny, new Damen entrance to the Medical Center (now Illinois Medical District) station in 1958, when it opened. The station is on what was called the Congress Line (now Forest Park Branch of the Blue Line), which was built down the middle of the Congress Superhighway (now I-290/Eisenhower Expressway), marking the first implementation of a novel and innovative model for rapid transit.

Note the sign under the canopy indicating that this then-part-time entrance was open. These signs, installed at all stops on the Congress Line, were much like “roller curtain” signs on trains that indicate a train’s route/destination. The signs, indicating if a station was open, could be changed with a switch in the agent’s booth.



November

A pair of 2400-series railcars in a special preview in August of 1976 pose for a photo on the Dan Ryan Connector at 18th/Wentworth (on the north end of the original Dan Ryan Line routing, before it was rerouted into the subway near Cermak-Chinatown). Orange Line trains now pass just behind here on tracks that were built later for when it went into service in 1993.

The cars were introduced in 1976 with bold, red-white-and-blue graphics on both the sides and the end of the cars—a nod to the nation’s bicentennial—and were initially introduced into Ravenswood Service (today’s Brown Line) and North-South Route (roughly today’s North Side Red Line and South Side Green Line, via the State Street Subway), and West-Northwest Route (today’s Blue Line).

Ultimately 200 of these railcars were part of CTA’s fleet, built by Boeing-Vertol between 1976-1978, with the car’s interior and exterior designs done by industrial design firm Sundberg-Ferar, who also worked on cars for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA, DC Metro), Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA).

One distinguishing feature of these cars that separated them from hundreds of their most recent predecessors is that they went back to sliding doors, which later made it possible to convert them for wheelchair access under the Americans with Disabilities Act. (Previous to these cars, starting back in the 1940s, our cars were built with streetcar-like folding “blinker doors” which had sets of four narrow panels that swung inward at stops.)

While the last cars of this series ended their service on the Orange and Brown Lines, they were most associated with Green and Purple Line services from the 1990s onward. They were retired after 38 years of service with a special ceremonial last trip on Wednesday, January 21, 2015, once enough new 5000-series cars were brought online to allow for their being cycled out of service.

Several 2400s remain on CTA today, however, including a handful that are used for work service (specially configured to tow heavy maintenance equipment, for example), as well as a number that are preserved as part of our Heritage Fleet and which have been restored to their original paint scheme and are decorated with period maps and other treatments such as brightly colored, historically appropriate seat inserts that add to the cars’ 1970s-modern feel.

Historical notes



December

Here we have an unusual scene with CTA Heritage Fleet cars 6711-12 seen trying out new track as part of a training and car testing tour leading up to our 75th Anniversary events!

The train is passing over the (typically 4-track, though currently under reconstruction) North Side Main Line at Clark Junction on its way to the Ravenswood Branch.

This new flyover track opened on Friday, November 19, 2021, carrying Kimball-bound Brown Line trains over Red and Purple Line tracks in both directions to help remove the potential for traffic jams at this key junction, originally built over a century ago by private predecessors to the CTA.

One of the key benefits to this new addition to our system solves what would've been an unthinkable tangle of tracks on many other systems where one busy line is constantly halting traffic on two other lines to cross paths. Not only does it eliminate common delays where trains would be held back at a station or stop at the junction to allow Brown Line train to cross, it allows for overall increased capacity—especially on the busy Red Line between Howard and 95th—now that a delay on any of the Brown, Purple or Red lines won't be as likely to gum up operations at this junction and leave miles worth of backups and rippling delays as was once likely under the previous configuration.

This, and work to straighten out the tracks, are key parts of the overall Red-Purple Modernization program, and the larger Red Ahead vision to improve service from Linden all the way to 130th with other projects such as aging station and track reconstructions, accessibility upgrades, modernizations to increase capacity and the extension of the South Side part of the Red Line from 95th to 130th.

In memoriam...

This historical calendar is dedicated to the memory of Gregory W. Stepanek, who was a loyal employee of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) for over twenty years. He was a lifelong transit enthusiast, whose passion for trains began at an early age when his mother would take him Downtown on streetcars, buses, and trains to shop at Marshall Fields, his favorite store.

Greg began at the CTA as a second career after spending 23 years as an elementary school band director with the Archdiocese of Chicago. Joining the CTA as a Publications Representative was his realization of a childhood dream to use his extensive transit knowledge to help create publications such as CTA's Bus and Rail System maps, customer alerts, and CTA's Historical Calendar.

Greg took great pride in being a part of a vital transit system that provides invaluable services to Chicago. He felt working at the CTA was his way of giving back.

Thank you, Greg. You are sorely missed.

