

RPM Next Phases Planning Study (Draft) UPDATED FAQs

Below is a summary of the questions and answers discussed in the March 2023 and the November 2023/February 2024 public meetings, as well as some additional questions that have come up throughout the process.

I. Red Purple Modernization (RPM) Program Background

1. What is the timeline for RPM Next Phases Planning Study?

The RPM Next Phases Planning Study started in 2021 and is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

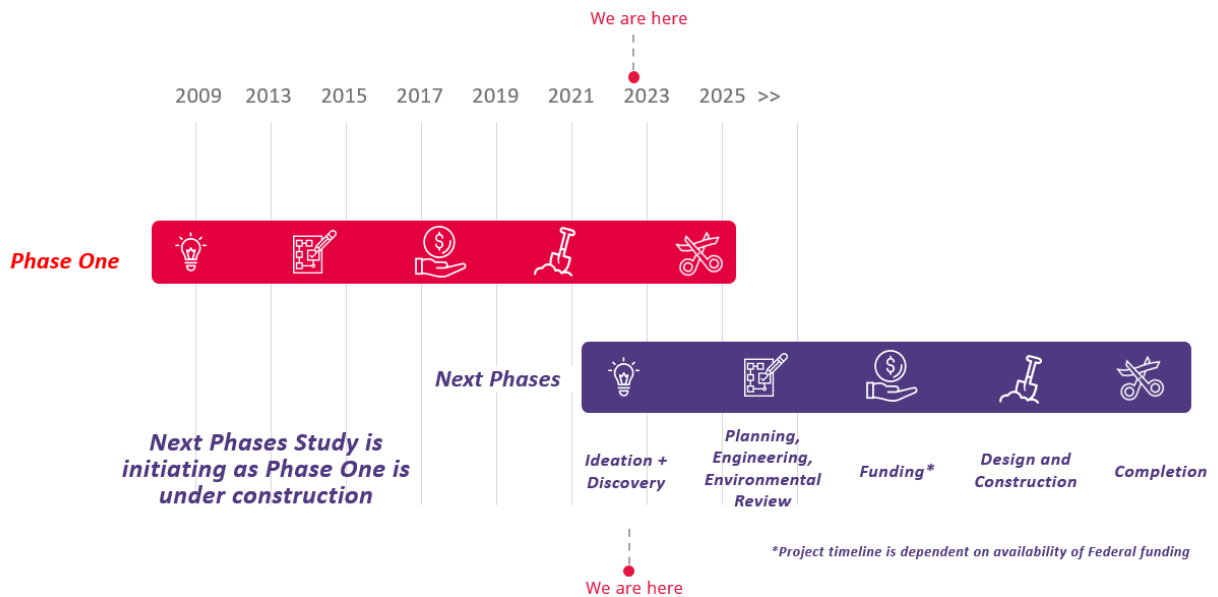
2. When would stations under RPM Next Phases be improved or reconstructed?

This study is part of the planning process for eventual construction and improvements. However, there are multiple steps before construction can happen, including environmental impacts review, design, engineering, and securing funding. This planning study will help CTA identify an implementation strategy to advance the project through these stages. For reference, initial planning for RPM started in 2009 and after following similar steps, construction for RPM Phase One started in 2019.

These important and complex infrastructure projects take time and due diligence, which is why CTA is starting the RPM Next Phases planning process now. The order of phasing for RPM Next Phases improvements has not yet been determined.

3. Where are we in the overall RPM process?

CTA started initial planning efforts for the 9.6-mile RPM corridor from Belmont to Linden in 2009. The planning work for the full corridor included a variety of critical considerations including expanding the capacity of the corridor, modernizing and improving the current infrastructure, ADA accessibility, and consolidating stops while increasing stations' entrances. In late 2013, the Federal Transit Administration and CTA developed a tailored approach for phased improvements to the RPM corridor. The RPM Phase One program planning began in 2014 and includes the construction of the Belmont Bypass and the reconstruction of four Red Line stations (Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, and Bryn Mawr). Construction started in 2019 and is expected to be completed in 2025. The RPM Next Phases study is helping CTA identify the future phases of RPM. A timeline graphic is below that includes RPM Phase One and Next Phases.



4. Why are you planning for improvements on the Red and Purple Lines considering COVID-19 and the related decrease in rail ridership?

The RPM Next Phases Planning Study is planning for the next 100 years. The Red Line is the CTA’s busiest rail line, traversing some of the densest, most transit-friendly neighborhoods in the country. A lot has changed with the pandemic, but we know that ridership is recovering, and the Red and Purple lines will continue to be critical infrastructure for Chicago and the northern suburbs. For example, in 2023, CTA saw its highest ridership levels since 2020 and provided more than one million rides a day several times.

As transit ridership increases post-pandemic, the modernization of RPM infrastructure will continue to serve riders who need reliable, efficient service today and for decades to come. Most RPM Next Phases stations are seeing ridership returning at an above average rate compared to the whole of the Red Line.

We are planning for long-term transit investments. While there may be some changes in commuting patterns, a modern, efficient transit system will always be a key component of Chicago’s transportation system.

5. Will RPM Next Phases improvements look similar to what we see going up in the Phase One area, with new track structures and embankment removal?

Chicago Segments

During RPM Phase One construction, it was determined that the existing 100-year-old retaining walls could not be rehabilitated in a manner that would extend their lives without near-term future failure. As the retaining walls are similar in configuration and era for the remaining RPM corridor in Chicago, it is anticipated that they will also need to be removed. This will be confirmed in a future engineering phase.

Evanston Branch

The Evanston branch structure has some physical differences from the structure in Chicago, which may allow for reconstruction of the embankment. The retaining walls are shorter, and the CTA property is wider, which makes replacing retaining walls more feasible. However, structural testing is needed to understand more about conditions. This will be completed in a future engineering phase.

6. Will widening platforms increase the footprint of CTA structures and impact adjacent buildings?

The Red and Purple lines operate in dense neighborhoods with buildings that are often close to track structures, particularly in the Chicago segments of the study area. An important design feature of modernizing the lines will be widening station platforms to allow for accessibility and customer comfort improvements (see question #19 for additional information). Wider platforms require the track structure to also be wider.

To address this challenge as part of the RPM Phase One station reconstructions, CTA considered many possible alternatives before determining which properties would be impacted. CTA used innovative engineering techniques during the development of the projects to reduce neighboring property impacts as much as possible, including implementing alley-spanning structures and adjusting platform widths and positions. As part of a future engineering phase, CTA will explore similar opportunities to minimize property acquisition required to support the improvements identified for RPM Next Phases.

II. Study Area Information

7. How did the study areas get their names?

Segments were named for station locations from south to north to match the naming convention from RPM Phase One (i.e.: “Lawrence to Bryn Mawr”). The segments are inclusive of track and structure sections that often extend past the station itself for ease of orientation.

8. Why does the study map on the website show the study area so far beyond the stations?

CTA is analyzing how to connect the RPM Next Phases segments to the RPM Phase One and Wilson station reconstructed segments. The RPM Next Phases study area includes infrastructure between the northern limits of the Belmont Bypass—north of Phase One track reconstruction near Cornelia Street—through the southern limits of the Wilson station project, near Montrose Avenue (and north of Sheridan station). It then continues from the northern limit of the Phase One project, north of Bryn Mawr near Ardmore Avenue, and then through the Purple Line terminus at Linden in Wilmette.

9. Are improvements to the Yellow Line being looked at in this study?

In general, analysis regarding the Yellow Line is not part of this study. Improvements to the Yellow Line are being analyzed only as part of the larger analysis of the Howard station and yard, where the Yellow Line terminates.

III. Public Outreach

10. How will you engage the community and stakeholders?

There are two rounds of targeted community engagement as part of the planning study. This engagement will provide participants with information about the study and gain feedback from the public that will help inform the study and recommendations. CTA met with key stakeholders during this process that included community organizations and institutions within the study area, and those who were recommended by City of Chicago alderpersons and the City of Evanston. CTA welcomes suggestions for new stakeholders; send any suggestions to rpnnextphases@transitchicago.com.

Round 1(Complete)

The first round of community engagement occurred in early 2023. CTA hosted two virtual information sessions/public meetings in March 2023. Recordings of the March 2023 meetings can be found [here](#). CTA also gathered public survey responses in March 2023 on how riders use the Red and Purple lines and station improvement preferences.

Round 2 (Complete)

The second round of community engagement took place in the winter of 2023/2024. The project website provides study updates and information about the second round of community engagement.

11. How can we stay informed?

We encourage residents and the public to receive updates about the project. [Click here](#) to sign up for the RPM Next Phases Planning Study email list to receive project updates and hear about future opportunities to provide feedback. Members of the public can also request to be added to the email list and submit feedback or questions by emailing rpnnextphases@transitchicago.com.

12. Is this the last chance for the public to provide input on RPM Next Phases?

There will be additional opportunities in the future to provide feedback regarding the RPM Next Phases plans during futures stages, including the environmental review process. [Click here](#) to sign up for the RPM Next Phases Planning Study email list to receive project updates and hear about future opportunities to provide feedback.

IV. Accessibility & ADA

13. Why is it important to make rail stations accessible?

Improvements made under the guidance of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will provide access to transit services for people with disabilities. ADA requires that newly constructed rail stations be readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities – meaning that they must be designed and constructed in accordance with ADA standards. By making these stations accessible, we are making sure that all people within the community can access and benefit from public transit services. CTA has a long-term plan, the [All Stations Accessibility Program \(ASAP\)](#), to make the remaining inaccessible stations accessible, including all of the stations included in the multi-phase RPM program.

14. What will be done to address accessibility on the Purple Line/Evanston Branch?

CTA has a long-term plan, the [All Stations Accessibility Program \(ASAP\)](#), to make all of its inaccessible stations accessible, including stations on the Evanston Branch. Currently, the Linden and Davis stations are accessible, and the ASAP plan calls for future phases of the RPM program to address the remaining stations. Any station that is rebuilt or renovated along the RPM corridor will be made accessible.

15. Can CTA add elevators now to make stations accessible instead of this long-term project?

Upgrading the RPM Next Phases stations to make them ADA accessible is a complex and costly undertaking. This is a big priority for CTA, and in most cases, accessibility cannot be added to a station without modernization. For example, platforms need to be widened, station entrances need to be reconfigured, and additional safety requirements for exiting need to be met. Not only are there physical space constraints and complexities to add elevators, but other conditions in the entryways and platforms make it so they would still not be ADA compliant if only elevators were added. Full reconstruction of the stations and the surrounding infrastructure will be necessary to provide accessibility for customers.

V. Stations – General

16. Is the study considering historic elements of stations and surrounding neighborhood?

Yes. This section of the rail system (and most of the stations within it) are over 50 years old, which triggers state and federal historic preservation review processes to be followed. The neighborhood context of the station areas is an important consideration for future designs. For example, the new RPM Phase One stations were designed to reflect neighborhood characteristics, as well as preserve or recreate architectural features. More information on the Phase One station designs can be found [here](#).

17. Many of the stations in the Next Phases study area include potentially historic properties. Specific preservation measures and additional historical research and analysis will be

considered in more detail as part of the environmental review stage of RPM Next Phases

18. Will station modernization improve safety and security?

Future station modernizations will include customer safety improvements. Examples of safety improvements include additional lighting and creating more space at entryways and on platforms to improve sightlines for staff and customers. These design strategies are in addition to the high-definition surveillance camera network in place at all stations. Station designs that include elements that enhance safety and security are not a part of this study but will be a part of later design stages.

The safety and security of public transit riders is the No. 1 priority for both the CTA and the Chicago Police Department. Crime is not isolated to CTA nor is it unique to us: It is a broader issue affecting cities across the nation as well as every major transit system in the United States.

CTA's Security Department works closely with CPD's Public Transportation Unit, a dedicated unit to CTA, on ways to keep passengers safe each day and deter crime.

CTA supplements CPD's efforts with its extensive network of security-cameras and with hundreds of personnel deployed across the system each day, around the clock, and who are trained and acutely focused on customer comfort and safety.

CTA also augments CPD efforts with contracted security guards and K-9 units, who focus on addressing issues like customer behavior and fare evasion, to prevent them from leading to other potentially illicit activities.

For more information on this topic, please

visit: <https://www.transitchicago.com/meetingthemoment/> and <https://www.transitchicago.com/security/>

19. How will station platforms be changed with station modernization?

Original stations built in the RPM study area included narrow platforms that restrict the length of trains, can cause crowding, limit accessibility, and create passenger discomfort. Station modernization will address this by creating wider and longer platforms. This has already taken place as stations have been reconstructed in the area, such as the Wilson station and the ongoing RPM Phase One station reconstructions.

Wider platforms create room for accessibility improvements such as elevators and escalators and more space for maneuvering wheelchairs. They also can accommodate more passengers during rush hour or events, increase customer comfort, and allow for more amenities such as informational screens and seating.

Lengthening platforms allows for longer trains, which increases capacity. Currently, all stations on the Red Line can accommodate 8-car trains. As part of the RPM Next Phases planning study, the approach to station improvements includes lengthening platforms to accommodate 10-car trains. Other portions of the Red Line would need

modifications to fit 10-car trains before trains of that length could operate on the entire line. Recent station reconstructions at Wilson station and the RPM Phase One stations, as well as new stations for the Red Line Extension, include designs that would accommodate 10-car trains.

Purple Line stations on the Evanston Branch can currently accommodate 6-car trains, while Purple Line Express stations from Howard to the Loop can accommodate 8-car trains. The RPM Next Phases study is considering Evanston Branch station improvements that would accommodate 8-car trains in the future, which are the longest trains that currently operate on the CTA rail system. Since the Purple Line Express shares stations with other lines, providing 10-car service is more complex and not being considered currently.

20. Is CTA acquiring properties to reconstruct stations or tracks?

Any acquisition needs will be identified after additional engineering and environmental work is conducted. That work will be conducted after the current planning study is complete and is still several years away. CTA will conduct public outreach for any property that would need to be acquired for the project as part of the environmental review process.

21. Will CTA be consolidating stations?

The Red and Purple Lines are unique in these areas because many of the stations are relatively close together compared to other stations on the CTA system. These Red and Purple line stations have been serving their respective neighborhoods for many decades and provide important transit connections for residents. Understanding these dynamics, this study picks up from the previous RPM Vision Study conducted in 2009, which included looking at stop consolidation for some areas. Stop consolidation is a reduction in the number of train stops coupled with the creation of new entrances at adjacent stops to improve station access points. Additional analysis and public outreach would be conducted on a range of considerations for any stop consolidation. These include impacts to the community, implications for new infrastructure, and customer travel times.

22. Why is CTA considering fully rebuilding stations when some Red Line stations were already rehabbed?

The improvements made at the Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, Thorndale, Granville, Morse, and Jarvis stations in 2012 were intended to be interim. The useful life of these investments was understood to be temporary, with the goal that each of these stations would eventually be fully reconstructed to include accessibility. The stations not included in RPM Phase One will have these interim renovations in place longer. One of the most significant factors influencing the useful life of these interim renovation investments relates to the embankment structure, which is from the early part of the 20th century and makes it difficult to manage water infiltration and other maintenance issues. The full reconstruction taking place as part of RPM Phase One will replace this embankment structure with new station and track support structures at Lawrence, Argyle, and Berwyn.

23. When will we know which stations will be addressed first in RPM Next Phases?

CTA is developing the phasing approach for RPM Next Phases as part of this study, which will include recommendations for which stations to address first. The study will continue through 2024 and is considering factors based on RPM goals, funding availability, and public outreach.

24. How is CTA working with the City to ensure the neighborhoods around these stations retain rental affordability for residents, small businesses and nonprofits after the improvements are made?

If not carefully managed, transit improvements can become a gentrification trigger in some cases with potential increase in property values. The City of Chicago has strengthened development ordinances in recent years to increase on-site affordable housing, especially in transit-served areas that have seen large amounts of development. Station areas within the City of Chicago are regulated through the City's Equitable Transit Oriented Development (eTOD) policies and the Connected Communities Ordinance.

As plans progress, CTA anticipates working with the community on transit oriented development (TOD), around station areas as it has with RPM Phase One ([RPM Phase One TOD Plan](#)), the Red Line Extension ([RLE Transit Supportive Development \(TSD\) Plan](#)), and the equitable TOD planning work at the [95th Red Line Station](#) currently underway with the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development.

VI. Station Access

25. How will the RPM Next Phases Planning Study improve connectivity to the Red and Purple Lines?

CTA will continue to consider connectivity to stations throughout the RPM Next Phases planning process. As CTA begins the planning process for station improvements, considerations for how customers walk, bike, and transfer from other modes (like bike, bus, or Metra) to the Red and Purple line stations will be taken into account. Efforts will be made to coordinate not just with CTA's Bus Operations staff, but also Metra and Pace, to work toward more seamless transfers where possible.

26. Will connections to Metra stations in Evanston be improved?

Connectivity between regional transit providers is an important objective for CTA. CTA is in frequent coordination with both Metra and Pace and will continue to be throughout the RPM Next Phases Planning Study.

Additionally, CTA has and will continue to coordinate with the City of Evanston and Metra regarding the Main Street TOD study.

VII. Stations – Howard

27. Is the study looking to improve Howard station?

Analyzing improvements at the Howard (bus and rail) terminal and yard is an important task for this study. Managing rail operations at Howard is complex because it is the only place on the CTA system where three lines (Red, Purple, and Yellow) terminate. Also, the facilities are within a densely developed area and adjacent to multiple historically significant buildings, which limits some options for reconfiguration. The goal of the RPM Next Phases Planning Study is to examine how to improve operations at the Howard terminal to support faster travel times, reduce bottlenecks, and add additional ridership capacity. CTA is analyzing options to streamline operations while balancing a limited footprint to fit the neighborhood context. Because of Howard's important role in the system, any improvements would positively impact the entire Red, Purple, and Yellow lines.

Howard station was renovated between 2008-2009 to accommodate ADA access with a new Paulina entrance with elevator access, but the overall track layout was not changed. The RPM Next Phases Study is considering ways to improve operational capacity and reliability at the Howard terminal, while leveraging the prior accessibility investments.. The current approach accomplishes this while providing an improved customer experience through wider platforms and transfers without having to use stairs or elevator.

At this time, the adjacent Gateway Centre commercial development and parking garage, which are not owned by CTA, are not part of the study scope.

28. How will Howard Station improvements impact the ongoing One Howard Street plan led by Rogers Park Business Alliance (RPBA), City of Evanston, Chicago DPD, and the 49th Ward office?

CTA has been coordinating with the One Howard Street project team and reviewing recommendations that may appear in the plan. CTA will continue to coordinate with One Howard Street regarding potential recommendations in relations to service and access to the station.

VIII. Stations – Morse

29. What is going to happen to the Mile of Murals on Glenwood between Estes and Farwell?

CTA understands the Mile of Murals is a community-driven public art project with murals dating back to 2007. While these murals are an important community asset, they are located on structural walls critical for the safe operation of CTA trains. It is important to understand that emergency repairs of retaining walls may affect the murals if deemed necessary to maintain the structure.

CTA will continue to work with the Rogers Park community and stakeholders with an interest in the murals to identify options to preserve the murals and/or document them or identify new community public art opportunities along the Glenwood Avenue corridor.

IX. Stations – Sheridan

30. Is the study looking to improve Sheridan station?

Identifying improvements for Sheridan station is part of this study scope. Given the age and physical condition of the station, it is anticipated to require full reconstruction. Additionally, the limited footprint available and current track layout makes it challenging to reconfigure the station to add elevators and widen platforms, which are needed to make the station ADA accessible. Modernization options for Sheridan have been studied in previous planning efforts dating back to 2009, and this study is building upon those efforts while examining the current conditions.

31. Are you planning to relocate Sheridan station?

As part of this study, CTA is looking several options for Sheridan station, which includes options to relocate the station in the same general area as the existing station. These relocation options will be evaluated together with alternatives to modernize the station in its existing footprint. The proposed station modernization recommendations do not currently include relocating the station.

32. Will the “Sheridan Curve” be straightened?

The “S-curve” that the Sheridan station platforms are within slows down train speeds, but there are very limited options to improve this condition while minimizing major community impacts. The tracks were originally constructed to avoid adjacent buildings, and this area is still densely developed and includes multiple historic resources adjacent to the tracks. The study is analyzing options to improve track geometry that takes the existing neighborhood context into account.

X. Stations – Central

33. Why hasn’t the Central Purple Line station been rebuilt yet?

The station was originally built in 1908, rebuilt in 1931, and needs to be reconstructed to make it accessible to all. The Central station also has historically significant features and finishes in the station house, which need to be considered before any modifications can be made. Like several other stations on the Evanston Branch of the Purple Line, this station is not ADA accessible and will be modernized to be made fully accessible in a future phase of the RPM program.

34. How will plans to redevelop Northwestern University’s Ryan Field impact the Next Phases Study?

CTA has coordinated with Northwestern regarding the proposed Ryan Field project,

along with Pace and Metra, regarding operations and special event operations. CTA will continue to coordinate with Northwestern University and other transit service boards as plans develop.

VIII. Service Changes

35. Will an additional transfer station between the Red and Purple Lines be considered?

CTA will consider connectivity to stations throughout the Next Phases planning process. For Purple Line Express service, there are currently four transfer stations that connect to the Red Line: Howard, Wilson, Belmont, and Fullerton. The Wilson station was added as a transfer station in 2017. Previous studies of the RPM corridor evaluated a transfer point at the Loyola station, and the current planning process has taken this same approach. Several steps are necessary for this approach to become a reality and CTA will keep the public informed.

36. Will Purple Line Express service hours be extended?

In the near term, CTA is prioritizing existing service while experiencing the effects of a nationwide transit operator shortage related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A key component of CTA's post-pandemic recovery efforts is strengthening the workforce to provide reliable transit services to meet current and future ridership demands.

As part of this study, service delivery concepts are being evaluated to address capacity constraints, though any recommended changes would likely not be implemented for several years. Separate from this study, extending service on the Purple Line Express is something CTA would consider in the future depending on resources.

37. Will the Purple Line close during reconstruction?

Service plans for future RPM Next Phases projects are not yet developed. Generally, CTA prioritizes service maintenance during construction, limiting any required line closure to the extent possible.

VIII. Funding

38. How is RPM Next Phases being funded?

As the project progresses, funding sources will be identified and obtained for environmental review, design, and construction. These potential sources include the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant funding (Core Capacity), which is the same source that funded a portion of the RPM Phase One construction along with other federal, state, and local sources. Federal grants aimed at improving accessibility on transit could also be an option for some stations.

These Federal programs require a local funding match, from non-federal sources. This study is exploring multiple local funding options. Local funding for RPM Phase One was generated by a Transit TIF and a similar approach could be taken for Next Phases.

Because multiple municipalities are included in this project area, TIF funds generated in one municipality would have to be used within that same municipality. No funding sources have been identified at this time.

39. Has funding for implementation been identified?

This planning study is the first step in the process to make the case for funding. As CTA moves through the process, the work from this phase will support the request for federal and local funding. Funding for related Red Line improvement projects like RPM Phase One and Red Line Extension have relied on competitive federal grant programs such as the Federal Transit Administration’s Capital Investment Grant and local funding in the form of Transit Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts. Information on RPM Phase One local funding, including the Transit TIF, can be found [here](#).

40. What is required for the federal Core Capacity funding? What does 10% capacity increase mean?

The Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Core Capacity program provides funding for infrastructure improvements that allow for a 10% increase in corridor service capacity where trains are most crowded. When looking at aligning improvements with this funding source, the project must consider how many more passengers can be accommodated in the peak hour and in the peak direction. For CTA, that means running enough service to accommodate 10% more passengers traveling in the peak hour of the morning rush period in the southbound direction. This may be accomplished by infrastructure improvements that allow for more frequent train schedules or lengthening trains, among other options.

41. How much will RPM Next Phases cost?

Costs for the future steps in the RPM Next Phases process, including environmental documentation, engineering, and construction, have not been determined yet. The specific infrastructure improvements need to be identified and placed into phases for cost estimates to be developed. The current RPM Next Phases Study is an early planning process and identifying potential funding strategies is part of the study.