

Governor Quinn Signs Major Mass Transit Reform Legislation

Written by Laurel White
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Improvements Require Universal Fare System and Web-Based Tracking,

Move Towards Free Wireless Internet and AEDs on Public Transportation

CHICAGO – July 7, 2011. Governor Pat Quinn today signed legislation to reform mass transit in the Chicago region by creating a universal fare card for riders of the CTA, Metra and Pace, and taking the first step towards making free wireless internet available on buses and trains throughout the region. The new law also requires Metra to provide web-based, real-time train arrival information, and lays the groundwork for the installation of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) on Metra passenger trains.

“Millions of Illinoisans use buses and trains every day to get to work and school, or to enjoy everything the Chicago area has to offer,” said Governor Quinn. “These improvements will make public transit a more robust and convenient travel option, boosting economic development and increasing access to schools and universities throughout the region.”

House Bill 3597 requires the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to implement a universal fare card system for the CTA, Metra and Pace by 2015. A universal fare card would ensure fast and easy access to all forms of public transportation in the region by allowing seamless transfers between transit systems.

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The legislation also takes an important first step towards making free wireless internet available to CTA, Metra, and Pace riders. Under the new law, the RTA will conduct a study to determine the feasibility of providing free Wi-Fi for laptop and mobile device users on buses and trains throughout the Chicago region.

The new law requires the RTA to conduct a report on the feasibility of installing AEDs on Metra trains. User-friendly defibrillators can be used in the event of cardiac arrest and gives members of the public the ability to attempt to resuscitate a victim before responders are able to arrive.

Under the new law, all fixed-route transit in the Chicago area will be required to provide web-based, on-time arrival information by July 1, 2012. While the CTA currently provides this information, users of the other transit systems are often out of luck. The new law will ensure that riders of all of the region's transit systems will have access to critical on-time data that improves the ease of traveling by bus or rail.

The new law was sponsored by Chicago Alderman Will Burns during his time as state representative, and State Senator Kwame Raoul (D-Chicago).

“Reliable, robust and convenient public transportation is the key to many of our most important priorities, especially economic development and education,” said Ald. Burns. “Everything we can do to have our transit systems work together to improve their service is a step towards a better quality of life for everyone.”

House Bill 3597 passed the Illinois General Assembly unanimously and takes effect immediately.

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