What’s Down the Line: The Outlook for Public Transit in a Post-Pandemic Chicago
• The value of public transit to society
• The changing travel behavior and mobility needs
• Impact of pandemic on ridership
• Why it is vital to restore public transit in the year ahead?
THE VALUE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

- Transit offers many benefits –
  - Improved access to jobs, healthcare, and fresh food,
  - Better health outcomes for people in neighborhoods.
  - A way to escape congestion and reduce delays on the road network

- From a dollars and cents perspective: APTA – for every $1, around $4 in generated economic returns
THE VALUE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

From a bigger perspective, transit helps preserve equity:

- Mobility to those who cannot drive or cannot afford to drive

During the peak of the pandemic, transit was the lifeline for many service sector and frontline workers
RIDERSHIP IMPACT
BY THE NUMBERS
Chicago Transit Authority
8 rail and 140 bus routes

455 million riders annually or 1.5 million rides each weekday before pandemic

30,000 daily riders during the pandemic

Drop of 80%
CTA Ridership during Pandemic

- Through November 2020, the CTA had lost about 56% of its ridership
- Rail ridership had reduced by 64.5% while bus dropped by 48%
- Not surprisingly, the weekday ridership numbers took the biggest hit (62% bus and 80% rail)
- Weekend ridership drop was almost the same for Saturdays and Sundays (54% bus versus 72% rail)
Pace Suburban Bus
218 routes

36.5 million riders annually or 96,000 riders each weekday before pandemic

30,000 daily riders during the pandemic

Drop of 70%
Metra Commuter Rail
619 rail runs

76 million riders annually or 281,000 riders each weekday before pandemic

2,500 daily riders during the pandemic

Drop of 90%
SO, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
These statistics are fluid – and transit ridership has improved on all three systems since the peak of the pandemic.

Without massive federal dollars – expect service cuts. Cuts in public transit service could impact essential workers, students, people without cars. This could hamper the economic recovery and Chicago’s future.

SOME INSIGHT TO CONSIDER
Chicago User Survey

- Transit is perceived as having high risk or extremely high risk among all travel modes at 77%.
- Low-income workers (<$30,000) were more likely (44%) to be temporarily laid off or lose their job due to the pandemic.
- Restaurant workers, and food service workers indicated that they were more likely to be in this category (66%).

Significant state of good repair needs faced by the industry. $89.7 billion is needed to revamp the nation’s transit network and bring it to a state of good repair.

The Chicago region (RTA) has projected a 10 year SGR and normal reinvestment in transit to the tune of $37.7 billion.

Even before the pandemic ridership was trending down (2014 to 2017 a loss of 600 million rides nationally).

Emerging competition from the shared mobility industry and pandemic induced remote work arrangements could affect not just travel behavior but transit use in particular.
WHAT'S DOWN THE LINE?
RTA Plan 3-Step

RTA Proposed:

1. 2021 budget that reflects realities
2. Execute the budget to sustain transportation services
3. Determine how to reinvent public transit looking to 2023
WHAT THE TRANSIT AGENCIES ARE DOING
The Next Time You Ride Public Transit

- Increased cleaning of vehicles and stations (more than a 90% increase in budget for cleaning, according to APTA survey of transit agencies)
- Mask and social distance requirements
- Constrained capacity at the peak has been relaxed now
The $1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package includes $30.5 billion for transit agencies across the country.

It also includes $14 billion for airlines and $1.5 billion for Amtrak.
THANK YOU

www.utc.uic.edu