

Much has changed in 22 years.

The collar counties have experienced steady growth since 1983, now accounting for 33% of the region's population and 35% of the region's jobs. While this growth does not necessarily directly correlate to transit use, the five collar counties generate 35% of Metra and Pace's morning ridership and 50% of Metra and Pace's passenger-miles. The five collar counties generate 15% of sales taxes in the region.

Additionally, changes affecting transit operating funds have occurred. These changes were not envisioned when the 1983 formula was adopted and have created additional pressures on RTA and transit agency budgets:

- Federal operating assistance, which provided \$53.5 million to CTA and Pace in 1983, was entirely eliminated in 1999.
- As the bonding authority for public transit services in the region, RTA uses \$69 million in sales tax dollars for debt service and allocates \$37 million to the service boards for capital investments. These capital dollars, while important, reduce the sales tax revenues available for operating subsidies.
- Since 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires equal access to public transportation for people with disabilities. This important yet expensive service cost CTA \$42.4 million and Pace \$11 million in 2003 (Metra has satisfied ADA requirements by making key stations accessible).
- Costs for security have almost tripled since 1983.

Existing revenues won't cover expansion plans.

Each transit agency has ambitious plans for expansion that will benefit every subregion of northeastern Illinois, such as CTA's Circle Line, Metra's STAR line and the DuPage County Transit Plan with its extensive Pace bus network. The federal transportation reauthorization bill, due to be adopted this summer, will provide capital funds for which state match will be necessary. Without additional revenues, the total available sales tax revenues and distribution under the 1983 formula will not meet the needs of these future expansion plans, for either capital or operating budgets.

Regional consensus is needed to move forward.

A high quality public transportation system is vital to the future of the northeastern Illinois region, which is already the third most congested region in the nation. There is no intention to redistribute existing funds to address the issues uncovered with the 1983 funding formula. The Committee on Mass Transit will launch a regional process to reach consensus on both new revenues for transit and a new funding formula. The debate is not about the city versus the suburbs, or the CTA versus Metra or Pace. It's about moving forward on the important expansions that all parts of the region want and need, so that we can enjoy a public transportation system that matches our world-class status.

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