

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metra switching to alternate schedules on Monday, March 23 due to coronavirus

Service represents about half the normal weekday schedule

CHICAGO (March 19, 2020) – Metra will begin operating an alternate weekday schedule on Monday, March 23, to adjust for the reduced number of riders due to school closures, work-from-home mandates and other consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. It will operate its normal weekend schedules this weekend on lines that have weekend service.

The alternate schedules, which can be viewed on metrarail.com, represent about half of Metra's normal weekday service but provide adequate service for those who still need to travel. There will be changes for every line except the Heritage Corridor, which will operate its normal schedule. Where we are able to, we will maintain the number of cars on trains to allow for social distancing. The reduced schedules will remain in effect until health officials deem the crisis has passed and/or ridership begins to return to normal. On a line-by-line basis, Metra is monitoring ridership and may further reduce service to meet the ridership demands.

“This is an unprecedented situation; we are attempting to do our best to provide service for those who still need public transportation and match service with demand,” said Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski.

Although Metra does not have hard numbers, it experienced a severe drop in ridership late last week, as the impacts of the pandemic spread. That decline has continued this week, particularly after many businesses switched to work-from-home and Gov. J.B. Pritzker ordered the closing of schools statewide and banned large gatherings in order to stop the spread of the virus.

Because it remains difficult to accurately predict the demand for service, and therefore the amount of service required to meet that demand, further adjustments are possible if the alternate schedules prove inadequate. Metra will give customers ample warning if schedules need to be adjusted again. Any potential changes to weekend schedules also will be announced with ample warning.

Metra is encouraging all riders to use the Ventra app for tickets because it requires less interaction with conductors. The app can be downloaded for free from the App Store or Google Play.

The reduction in service will also give Metra a greater opportunity to clean its cars, concentrating on disinfecting high-touch areas such as handrails, door handles and seats, because we will need fewer trainsets for service.

“We never take a reduction in service lightly, but we are using this as an opportunity to provide passengers with even safer conditions,” Derwinski said. “It is our intent to continue to provide train service unless instructed not to do so.”

This past weekend, Metra began bringing on extra crews on weekends to do additional cleaning and disinfecting of our cars and locomotives. Metra also brought in extra crews to clean and disinfect downtown stations.

Metra will continue to monitor this situation and stay in touch with federal, state and local health authorities. We hope all our customers stay safe and healthy.

For all of Metra’s response to the coronavirus pandemic, please go to [metrarail.com](https://www.metrarail.com).

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About Metra

Metra is one of the largest and most complex commuter rail systems in North America, serving Cook, DuPage, Will, Lake, Kane and McHenry counties in northeastern Illinois. The agency provides service to and from downtown Chicago with 242 stations over 11 routes totaling nearly 500 route miles and approximately 1,200 miles of track. Metra operates nearly 700 trains and provides nearly 281,000 passenger trips each weekday.

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