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Mayor Emanuel and CTA Announce the All Stations Accessibility Program to Make Chicago's Transit System 100 Percent Accessible

The strategic plan establishes a blueprint to make all rail stations across the city accessible in the next 20 years

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Dorval R. Carter, Jr., President of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), in collaboration with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, today announced details of the first-ever plan to make Chicago's public transit system 100 percent accessible to people with disabilities over the next 20 years.

CTA today released its All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP) Strategic Plan, which lays out the agency's proposed plans to increase accessibility through the modernization of 42 rail stations that are currently inaccessible by wheelchair. The plan also details future upgrades or replacements for 162 existing passenger elevators across the rail system.

"By ensuring that every CTA station in Chicago is accessible to all Chicago residents, we are creating a world-class transit system that make public transportation a convenient and viable choice for everyone," said Mayor Emanuel. "The investments we are making in the CTA will benefit Chicagoans of all abilities for generations to come."

Following the 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), about 6 percent of CTA's rail stations met accessibility standards laid out in the landmark legislation. After the December 2009 completion of the Brown Line Capacity Expansion Project, CTA became compliant with what is known under the ADA as "key" station upgrade requirements.

Under the leadership of Mayor Emanuel, CTA has made significant progress in making its system fully accessible to customers with disabilities. All CTA trains and buses are wheelchair accessible and 71 percent of all CTA rail stations are accessible via elevator or ramp, putting CTA ahead of most of its peers across the transit industry. Stations made accessible under Mayor Emanuel's leadership include:

- Garfield, 63rd, 87th – Red Line South Reconstruction project
- Addison – *Your New Blue*
- Wilson (Red/Purple)
- Quincy (Loop; later this year)

CTA also opened three new accessible rail stations—Morgan (Pink/Green), Cermak-McCormick Place (Green) and Washington/Wabash (Loop), which replaced two previously inaccessible stations.

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"I believe in Mayor Emanuel's vision for a 100 percent accessible system and share his commitment to ensure that CTA can be used by everyone," said President Carter. "The ASAP Strategic Plan is our blueprint for getting there and we can now move forward more aggressively with our modernization planning and our efforts to seek project funding."

In the past year, two additional stations have been made wheelchair accessible following the construction of the Washington/Wabash Loop Elevated station and the reconstruction of the Wilson Red Line. In 2018, crews will wrap up work on the historic Quincy Loop Elevated station which is receiving new elevators and other ADA amenities added.

"The All Stations Accessibility Program gives life and a roadmap to our commitment to ensure everyone has equal access to public transportation options across Chicago," said Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Karen Tamley. "I am proud to work with the CTA and Mayor Emanuel as we take action to ensure individuals with disabilities are afforded the same opportunities to travel, work and thrive in a world-class accessible city."

For the remaining 42 inaccessible CTA stations, modifications proposed under the ASAP Strategic Plan include:

- New elevators and/or ADA compliant ramps
- Power-operated doors
- Wheelchair accessible fare gates
- Braille signage and wayfinding
- New or relocated stairways
- New or modified emergency egress points
- Accessible employee facilities
- Wider and/or longer platforms for wheelchair maneuverability
- Adjacent sidewalks and street crosswalks made ADA accessible

Upgrading CTA's rail system to make it fully accessible is a complex task, since the stations in need of accessibility improvements were built between 50 and 120 years ago, when escalators, elevators and other modern amenities were not standard components of station construction projects.

There are significant challenges to bringing older stations to modern-day standards, which require additional planning time and expense. For example, age and condition of a station can require a complete rebuild versus upgrades to existing infrastructure. Also, the layout of a station may require multiple elevators for access from street-level to each platform. Other issues and considerations include site constraints; historic designations of the station and/or adjacent infrastructure; and whether the station is subway or elevated, etc.

The ASAP Strategic Plan will be updated over time as CTA moves forward with planning and construction work as part of the agency's ongoing modernization of its transit system.

Currently, only a portion of the work included in Phase One is funded and there is no dedicated funding for future phases of the ASAP Strategic Plan. As it does with all capital projects, CTA will continue to seek funding for these improvements from a variety of local, state and federal sources.

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Since 2011, Mayor Emanuel and CTA have announced, begun or completed more than \$8 billion of transit improvements projects to build a 21st century, world-class transit system. The wide-ranging investments include more than 40 new and renovated CTA rail stations, track and rail infrastructure upgrades, new trains and buses, technology investments including installing 4G wireless service in all subways and installing unique public artwork in CTA stations across the city

ASAP comes right before the 28th Anniversary of the landmark civil rights legislation, The Americans with Disabilities Act. Since its inception, Chicago has been a long-term leader in disability rights with a robust community of actively engaged disability advocacy leaders and groups. Since 2011, the City of Chicago has installed over 91,000 ADA compliant curb ramps and has included the needs of people with disabilities into all city emergency plans. The city plans to strengthen access for individuals with disabilities in the areas of transportation, cultural institutions, education and employment. In addition to providing disability accessibility at close to 70 percent of CTA stations, this includes plans to increase additional access to fitness equipment at city parks, taxicab reforms and incentives to increase the number of accessible vehicles.

For more information about the All Stations Accessibility Program or to download the full ASAP Plan, visit: www.transitchicago.com/accessibility/asap.aspx

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