

# Chicago Transit Authority

## Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study

### Public Outreach October 7 & 8, 2013 Responses to Public Comments and Questions

February 2014

Written questions and comments regarding the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study were submitted by a variety of individuals and groups from throughout the Chicago region at the study's Public Meetings held on October 7 and 8, 2013. In addition, public comments and questions were submitted directly to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) via e-mail and postal mail through November 7, 2013.

All of the questions and comments have been collected and compiled to provide a comprehensive review of the issues raised along with CTA's responses. Every question, comment, and suggestion, submitted during the public comment period has been compiled in the "Outreach Comment Database" (see separate document). Each question has been recorded verbatim and assigned a number that corresponds with the answers provided in this document, ensuring every question or comment submitted has been reviewed and answered or acknowledged. Collectively, the public comments and preferences will be considered in the evaluation of alternatives and concepts introduced through the public involvement process and may be evaluated and/or reflected in advancing alternatives as appropriate.

Many of the comments received were very similar in nature. As a result, similar comments and their responses have been grouped by topic and "General Comment" heading below to avoid duplicative responses. Questions or comments requiring individual or specific responses are also included below along with unique responses. In order to understand some terms used in the Comments and Responses, it may be necessary to review the original Public Meeting presentation materials which are posted on CTA's Web site for this project [www.transitchicago.com/bluweststudy/](http://www.transitchicago.com/bluweststudy/).

The list below shows the index of topics covered in the report, along with the number of comments received for each. Because comments often refer to more than one topic, the numbers associated with each do not equal the total number of comments received.

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## 1. Vision Study Overview

### General Comment:

What is the purpose of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study? Who are the stakeholders?

### Pertains to specific comments:

50, 53, 56, 64

### Response to Overall Category Comment:

The Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study was initiated last spring to develop a long-term planning strategy for the Blue Line Forest Park Branch from Clinton station on the east to Forest Park Terminal Station to the west, with the study area continuing to Mannheim Road for the evaluation of transit proposals considered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) during their adjacent I-290 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Study. While CTA is not developing expansion alternatives of its own, the Vision Study is evaluating expansion alternatives proposed by IDOT to ensure feasibility and recommend preferred locations (see General Comment #8 about the Blue Line Extension for more details).

This Study has been designed to address some of the questions about transit that have surfaced over the past few years due to the adjacent I-290 EIS Study. The components of the Vision study include an assessment of existing conditions on the branch, an evaluation of the existing and potential transit market in the corridor, and the development of conceptual service patterns and station designs - designed to meet the station rehabilitation needs and potential market demand determined in earlier stages of the study.

The study is supported by federal Urban Work Program funds, in addition to an earmark provided to the Village of Oak Park to evaluate livability improvements within the community, and the IDOT I-290 EIS Study, which is providing modeling and public outreach resources to the CTA study.

Stakeholders throughout the study area include municipalities adjacent to the branch, community groups, elected officials and city aldermen, and city and state agencies such as the Chicago Department of Transportation, Illinois Department of Transportation, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Regional Transportation Authority, Metra, and Pace. CTA has been a participant in the I-290 EIS Study since its inception in 2009, and is using their I-290 Corridor Advisory Group meetings and Public Meetings to solicit Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study feedback from stakeholders involved in the adjacent I-290 EIS Study Process.

The written comments received at the October 7 and 8, 2013 public meetings and other detailed comments submitted within the comment period extending through November 7, 2013 are being answered individually for the record in the format of this document, which will be made available publicly on the CTA Web site, with email notification to meeting participants and stakeholders. To request participation on our stakeholder list, please email [bluweststudy@transitchicago.com](mailto:bluweststudy@transitchicago.com).

The goals of the Vision Study are to determine what a long-term modernization program for the branch would look like, as well as provide IDOT with a CTA-preferred alternative that they can incorporate into their modeling and planning efforts for the development of a coordinated I-290 / Blue Line Multimodal Plan.

### Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:

#### Comment:

30: How can we get involved to give citizen input to the Blue Line Extension west...?

#### Response:

During the remainder of the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study, stakeholders are welcome to submit comments related to the existing Blue Line and to the potential Blue Line Extension within the study area

boundaries (see Comment # 1 above). If you have comments, please write to us at Chicago Transit Authority, Attn: Ryan Mouw, Government and Community Relations Officer, 567 W Lake Street, Chicago, IL 60661 or submit your comments by email to [blueweststudy@transitchicago.com](mailto:blueweststudy@transitchicago.com). All comments will be reviewed by the project team and included in the project documentation.

After the study is completed, comments can be submitted at any time via CTA customer service. CTA customer service directs these to the most appropriate internal departments for review and response where appropriate. CTA customer service can be reached at 1-888-YOUR-CTA (1-888-968-7282) or for TTY (Hearing Impaired) customer service at 1-888-CTA-TTY1 (1-888-282-8891). Comments may also be submitted through our online contact form at <http://www.transitchicago.com/feedback/>.

## **2. Project Timing**

### **General Comment:**

When would construction start and how long would it take? Would CTA and IDOT work be coordinated?

### **Pertains to specific comments:**

20, 42, 58, 59

### **Response:**

Since CTA began the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study, CTA and IDOT have been collaborating on each of our adjacent studies in the multimodal Blue Line / I-290 corridor. The roadway project would likely be constructed in stages, rather than all at once, with each stage leveraging improvements to all modes. For example, overhead bridges would be completed prior to the I-290 mainline, and would result in modernized CTA stations, improved station accessibility and improved community connectivity. Given the collaboration at such early phases of project planning, CTA and IDOT projects in the multimodal corridor will be well coordinated. By coordinating planning efforts, both agencies are seeking efficiencies to improve project outcomes and potentially reduce total project costs.

Availability of funding is critical for the continued advancement of the project, and as of now there are no local or federal funds available. See General Comment # 3 for more details on project cost and funding. The timing of Blue Line Extensions to Maywood or Mannheim Road could not happen any earlier than the overall branch rehabilitation, and would likely be programmed as subsequent projects. See General Comment # 8 for more details on a potential Blue Line Extension.

Beyond the Planning Phase, if funding were available, IDOT and CTA would require approximately three additional years to complete remaining steps in the project development process. The environmental requirement for a transit rehabilitation project that is staying within its existing right-of-way is estimated to take about one year to complete. Engineering and design work for such a project is estimated at one to two years. The length of time for construction depends on how much service will be maintained during the construction timeline. For example, the Dan Ryan Red Line Reconstruction included 9.4 miles and was completed in 5 months by shutting down the entire branch and providing parallel bus service; whereas the Blue Line O'Hare Branch Rehabilitation includes 12.5 miles and is estimated to take four years with temporary weekend closures and bus shuttle services.

## **3. Project Cost and Funding Options**

### **General Comment:**

What are cost projections and how will the project be funded? Will the adjacent I-290 highway project advance even if there is not funding for transit? Some suggestions for creative funding include value capture and fare adjustments.

### **Pertains to specific comments:**

20, 39, 40, 41, 44, 61

**Response to Overall Category Comment:**

Cost projections have not yet been developed at this stage of planning. Using the feedback from this public outreach process, station alternatives will be proposed for each station along the branch. Using those concepts and documented infrastructure needs in the corridor, a rough project cost will be estimated in advance of more detailed engineering work.

Project funding and financing will be sought from the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, State of Illinois and various local sources. These agencies may have various grants available with unique eligibility criteria and respective pros and cons; projects often compete to secure funds at the national, state and local level. Even within the CTA, priorities must be set to determine which of many worthy projects will advance at any given time.

Currently, funding for the Blue Line Forest Park Branch has not been secured beyond the current Vision Study. Subsequent project phases include an environmental analysis and engineering in advance of construction (see General Comment #2 for more details on project timing).

A multi-modal funding plan could emerge, one that combines improvements to the Blue Line with improvements to the adjacent I-290 expressway project by packaging federal, state, and local sources. The Blue Line and I-290 were originally built as one combined project, and a funding plan that combines highway and transit funding may have appeal from several perspectives. Other examples of multi-modal highway and transit projects nationwide include Denver's Transportation Expansion (or T-REX) including 17 miles of highway and 19 miles of Light Rail Transit; the Columbia River Crossing between Portland, OR and Vancouver, WA which includes two aged highway bridges and the addition of light rail across the river on the same structure; and the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Extension with provisions included in prior highway projects to leave space for rail and rail stations in the highway median.

Creative funding solutions will be considered as the project advances; suggestions provided in the project comments are welcome.

**Other Specific Comments on this Topic:**

**Comment:**

47: Could revenues from wider bridges with commercial space be returned to the community in which they are located?

**Response:**

The costs and benefits of improvements to bridges will depend upon the outcome of the current IDOT I-290 EIS Study, which is planning for the rebuilding of bridges along the I-290 corridor from Racine Avenue to Mannheim Road, and the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study, which is planning for the modernization of existing stations and customer amenities. It is thus premature to prepare a quantitative analysis to identify the level of assessment and the boundaries for a potential assessment district. As the IDOT and CTA studies develop final recommendations, an initial analysis of potential revenues and assessment levels can be useful, nevertheless, to help provide some financial feasibility of this recommendation. Value capture could be considered as a potential funding source if there is broader interest in the study area. The adjacent municipality – such as the City of Chicago, Village of Oak Park, or Village of Forest Park – would be responsible for initiating a value capture district.

#### **4. Design Features – Station Improvements**

**General Comment for Rehabilitating or Modernizing Existing Station Designs:**

There is a strong level of support within the community for rehabilitating or modernizing existing station designs.

**Pertains to specific comments:**

13, 17, 20

**General Comment for Compact Station Design:**

There is support within the community for implementing a compact station design along the Blue Line Forest Park Branch.

**Pertains to specific comments:**

3, 15

**General Comment for Various Designs Proposed:**

There is support within the community for specific station improvements such as wider platforms, more weather and noise protection, and/or ADA accessibility.

**Pertains to specific comments:**

2, 4, 15, 20

**Response to Overall Category Comment:**

Several recommendations and preferences for station design were provided on the comment cards submitted by the public. Staff will review all suggestions and incorporate into the proposed concepts those that offer merit for further consideration. The three station concepts proposed include the renovation concept, the wider platforms concept, and the compact station concept.

The Renovation Concept Option would keep the existing profile the same with similar platform widths, but would renovate the station and improve the existing infrastructure. This option retains existing ramps and does not provide ADA accessibility, wider platforms, or weather/noise protection. However, it does provide multimodal connections.

The Wider Platforms Concept Option would use additionally available CTA right-of-way within the transportation corridor. An optional pedestrian bridge could be added to the middle of a station for an additional community access point. This option would provide for retrofitted ramps or elevators, allowing for ADA accessibility. It would also offer wider platforms and potentially improved weather/noise protection. It also provides multimodal connections.

The Compact Station Concept Option would shift the platform of the station to below the major bridge or arterial that supports the station. This option would provide station head houses / access points on either side of the main street the meets the station. The compact design would be similar to a station on the Dan Ryan / Red Line South Branch of the CTA system where platforms are directly below the roadway instead of between two major roadways (like the existing Blue Line Forest Park Branch design). This option would provide ADA-accessible elevators to the platform level, wider platforms, improved weather/noise protection, and improved multimodal connections over other options since bus transfer passengers could enter the station on both the north and south sides of the street. However, it would reduce total access points at each station.

These station options are available to Racine, Kedzie-Homan, Pulaski, Cicero, Austin, Oak Park and Harlem stations – all of which have two station entrances on parallel streets with a station in between. A variation on these three designs was considered for the UIC-Halsted and Illinois Medical District stations, which have a similar design to the two station entrance stations, but with an additional access point in the middle of the platform. The Western station currently has one access point from Western Avenue and only the Wider Platform and Compact Station concepts were considered. The Forest Park Terminal and Clinton subway station are both unique among the majority of stations along the branch and only the Renovation Concept was considered for these two stations.

Based on comments received at the public meetings as well as additional project analysis, CTA is currently working to identify a preferred concept for each station along the branch. These proposals will be presented at an upcoming IDOT Corridor Advisory Group meeting as well as the next opportunity for joint IDOT-CTA public

outreach to the community (either through a Public Meeting or Public Hearing format) in coordination with the IDOT I-290 EIS Study.

**Other Specific Comments on this Topic:**

**Comment:**

57: How will adding access to Blue Line from both sides of Harlem help anything?

**Response:**

Adding access to both sides of Harlem Avenue in the Compact Station Concept Option would shift the platform of the station to below the major bridge or arterial that supports the station. The main benefits of this option from an access perspective would be improved multimodal connections since bus transfer passengers could enter the station on both the north and south sides of the street without having to cross heavy traffic volumes on Harlem Avenue on one leg of their transit trip.

**5. Design Features – Passenger Usage and Station Access**

**General Comment:**

Existing pedestrian access to CTA stations across bridges is constrained. There is support within the community for safer pedestrian access and bicycle connections/parking.

**Pertains to specific comments:**

4, 10, 11, 15, 23, 36, 46, 52, 57, 63

**Response to Overall Category Comment:**

The Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study is evaluating access between CTA stations and the adjacent communities. For each station, CTA and the project team visited the station to evaluate the condition of sidewalks leading to the station, the presence of bike parking, and the potential for ADA access improvements within the station. Additionally, each station was evaluated to determine if it is currently served by a bus route, a bike route, and if the connecting street is easy to cross.

CTA advocates that station houses should be welcoming to all users. Ample sidewalks should lead to and from them. Bus stops, seating and places to lock bicycles should be located near station house entries. From the outside, stations should be easily visible and attractive additions to the neighborhood landscape.

The station design concepts (see General Comment # 4 for more details) propose broad improvements within these categories and CTA appreciated comments and preferences solicited at the recent Public Meetings. Where discrepancies occur between the existing conditions found at the station and CTAs goals, improvements are being incorporated into the preferred station design for each station.

CTA has direct responsibility for access and customer experience within the station houses, and coordinates with the Chicago Department of Transportation and IDOT to improve streetscapes and connections from the communities to the stations. IDOT's I-290 EIS Study includes the incorporation of bicycle and pedestrian amenities on cross-street bridges starting with wider sidewalks and/or bike lanes, and 'plazas' at Harlem and Austin. Other improvements include pedestrian push button signals, improved lighting, additional marked crosswalks, raised pedestrian refuge islands and other safety related design considerations.

Updated proposals and recommendations will be presented at an upcoming IDOT Corridor Advisory Group meeting as well as the next opportunity for joint IDOT-CTA public outreach to the community (as a Public Meeting or Public Hearing) in coordination with the IDOT I-290 EIS Study.

**Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:**

**Comment:**

What happened to the concept of decking over the expressway? Can a wider bridge accommodate commercial development?

**Pertains to specific comments:**

47, 49

**Response:**

In coordination with the support of the Village of Oak Park to better understand the relationship between transit access and livability within the community, CTA is developing sample concepts for decking over the expressway in coordination with transit stations. At the recent public meetings, a board titled Model Streets and Overpasses was displayed that showed two sample decking concepts.

The first image showed three approximately 700-foot wide decks that cover a portion of Interstate 696 in Southfield and Oak Park, Michigan. A close-up aerial image of one of the three parks, with sprawling paths and spacious open areas, over the expressway is shown. A larger-scale aerial image shows the span of highway that includes the three park segments as the highway crosses through development on either side.

Alternately, a bridge with retail frontage continues the urban scale over Interstate 670 in Columbus, Ohio. An aerial image of the bridge with retail on either side, over the expressway, is shown. A street-view image shows pedestrians walking in front of the retail store fronts including an al fresco dining area with umbrellas and bordering planters. This street view image looks like the pedestrians are walking on any urban street.

Concepts that are consistent with improved transit access will be further developed as part of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study. These types of project typically require additional institutional coordination and funding to advance; however, they do provide tangible benefits to the recipient communities.

**Comment:**

3: I like the outdoor canopy type like 35th street, at mid-block crossing.

**Response:**

At the recent public meetings, a board titled Model Streets and Overpasses was displayed that showed the protective median and mid-block crossing from CTA's Sox-35<sup>th</sup> Station on the Red Line. An image shows the pedestrian striping across the 35<sup>th</sup> Street to provide safer pedestrian crossings. Additionally, in the image, the canopy over the crosswalk is shown, which protects pedestrians from weather elements, and a large refuge area between the north and southbound traffic provides a place for pedestrians to stop mid-crossing if necessary.

This type of canopy can improve pedestrian access to station houses which are only located on one side of the street, especially when bus operations or traffic generators require CTA passengers to cross the street. CTA will continue to work with the Chicago DOT and IDOT (depending on roadway jurisdiction) to determine the feasibility of installing mid-block crossings at rail station locations.

## **6. Design Features – Right-of-Way and Location**

**General Comments:**

Is CTA considering moving the location of the Blue Line tracks – to the center of the expressway (a move to the north west of Cicero), to the adjacent CSX property (a move to the south west of Cicero), or as a subway (in the same location, along a segment or the entire branch west of Clinton)?

**Pertains to specific comments:**

1, 28, 36, 38, 45, 55, 60, 65

**Response to Overall Category Comment:**

CTA's current Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study is evaluating several service and station alternatives; however, all of these proposals do currently fit within the current right-of-way that CTA has available in the center and to the south of the existing I-290 expressway facility. Even in the most aggressive modernization concept evaluated within the context of this study (the Wider Platforms Concept described in General Comment #4), changing the location or right-of-way of the existing facility would not be a necessary consideration.

IDOT has made a commitment to stay within the existing transportation corridor and has stated that they do not require any additional right-of-way, including CTA right-of-way, to add lanes to I-290. However, IDOT has indicated that they could more fully optimize roadway design features if unused freight rail right-of-way was available for highway purposes. CTA has not yet seen specific proposals that would indicate a shift in the current CTA location. However, CTA is working closely with IDOT's I-290 EIS Study team and would thoroughly evaluate any proposal that IDOT presents to CTA.

CTA is not considering subway alternatives on the Forest Park Branch west of Clinton station within the current right-of-way.

## **7. Service Options**

### **General Background on Service Option:**

The Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study has evaluated several service options through the context of the study, including State of Good Repair Service (or elimination of slow zones), Skip-Stop Service, Express Service, Semi-Express Service, and Turnback Service. This evaluation is ongoing and will incorporate comments from the Public Meetings on October 7 and 8, 2013. As this component of the study is finalized, a Technical Memorandum detailing this evaluation – the Service Patterns Analysis Report – will be posted to the project website.

### **Service Options Comments:**

**Comment:**

1: Run the Blue Line a Skip-Stop (A-B trains) service to attract I-ke drivers.

**Response:**

The Skip-Stop, or A-B, service operation is an express option typically used when no passing track area is available. By having "A" and "B" stops, trains rarely catch up with one another because the two routes skip alternating stops. This system of operation allows for increased train speeds; however, it reduces the frequency of service offered, as half of the trains do not stop at any particular stop (assuming the skip-stop service was evenly assigned throughout the branch).

This service alternative has been evaluated as part of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study; however, this service option was not pursued for further evaluation for several reasons. It's important to note that even though A-B train operation was a system-wide practice in the 1940's, this operating approach was never employed as an operational service plan on the Forest Park Branch. Furthermore, adopting this operating plan on the branch would not reduce operating expenses or equipment requirements to any extent, in fact, additional costs of station signage would be incurred. The A-B service pattern may cause confusion for new riders because of varying train schedules. If executed without adding any new trains to the daily schedule, this would result in up to 24-minute headways between trains at the lower-trafficked stations, which would be a distinct deterrent to transit usage.

**Comment:**

29: An Oak Park express blue line train would be fantastic!



**Response:**

When considering the average daily boarding by station on the branch, it is apparent that the Forest Park terminal has average daily boarding (3,969 in 2012) in the range similar to the four stations on the east end of the branch, primarily because it acts as a significant bus transfer and park and ride station. No other stations between Illinois Medical District and Forest Park have average daily boarding at this level.

For this reason, express service and semi-express service has been evaluated as part of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study. For purposes of preliminary evaluation, the express service plan assumed to provide stops only at Forest Park, Illinois Medical District, Racine, UIC-Halsted, and Clinton, with running times reflecting the elimination of slow zones. The semi-express option assumed to provide stops at Forest Park, Oak Park, Austin, Kedzie-Homan, Illinois Medical District, UIC-Halsted, and Clinton, with running times reflecting the elimination of slow zones.

Neither of these service options was pursued for further evaluation for several reasons. First, while some additional right-of-way is available in the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Branch corridor, in some segments the implementation of express service may conflict with another goal of modernization to increase platform widths to current design standards. Before considering physical limitations, CTA still evaluated the express and semi-express options described above to better understand the potential costs and benefits.

This express service approach would save about 3.5 minutes over the all-stop trains by passing up seven intermediate stations. This approach would also require the addition of new revenue tracks within the right-of-way for passing stopped trains. As with the A/B service plan, this option would not reduce operating expenses or car requirements significantly and would result in reduced service at the intermediate, bypassed stations, resulting in these stations having up to a 24-minute service frequency interval, which would be a deterrent to transit usage. This operating configuration would also result in reduced service to a number of stops, such as Cicero and Kedzie-Homan, which have significant ridership based on bus transfers, resulting in a less effective transit network overall. Additionally, Metra's UP West and BNSF lines immediately north and south of the study area currently provide similar express service from Oak Park or Austin Avenues.

In an effort to serve some of the intermediate stations bypassed in the previous full express service configuration, the semi-express option was evaluated to maintain service to some stations with relatively high ridership levels. However, this option would still significantly reduce headways (up to 24 minutes) at stations not served by the new service option. While fewer stations are bypassed in this alternative, more opportunities exist to maintain an effective overall network when bus transfers are considered; however, the more stations included in the semi-express option results in diminished time savings even while additional revenue tracks for passing trains would be required.

## **8. Blue Line Extension**

**General Comment:**

Is CTA studying an extension? There is support within the community for a westward Blue Line Extension.

**Pertains to specific comments:**

6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 41, 49, 51, 56, 62

**Response to Overall Category Comment:**

The Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study was initiated last spring to develop a long-term planning strategy for the Blue Line Forest Park Branch from Clinton station on the east to Forest Park Terminal Station to the west, with the study area continuing to Mannheim Road for the evaluation of transit proposals considered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) during their adjacent I-290 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Study. While CTA is not currently developing expansion alternatives of its own, the Vision Study is evaluating expansion alternatives proposed by IDOT to ensure feasibility and recommend preferred station locations such that IDOT can reserve right-of-way for a potential future transit facility.

CTA's stated agency priority is to modernize the existing system in advance of expansion. The CTA has a \$10 billion state of good repair maintenance need. Moreover, federal funding agencies that administer grants that would likely be necessary to advance a large expansion project also require that transit agencies reduce their backlog of needed repairs before a financing plan can be approved. Therefore, it's not just prudent for CTA, but it's also a de facto requirement to obtain certain types of funding for expansion. The emphasis of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch is to propose a plan for rehabilitating or modernizing the existing branch, but also work with IDOT to ensure that the proper space and station locations are available for when expansion does become a reality.

**Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:**

**Comment:**

What is happening with the ComEd site at 1<sup>st</sup> Ave? Could that become the new CTA yard? Is an extension of the Blue Line to at least 1st Avenue foreseeable in 5, 10, 20, 25 years?

**Pertains to specific comments:**

43, 59

**Response:**

The Forest Park Terminal Station is also home to the CTA Forest Park Rail Yard and Shop facilities. Similar to the infrastructure on the Forest Park Branch of the Blue Line, the yard and shop facilities are largely beyond their useful life and in need of rehabilitation or modernization. Moreover, the yard and shop facility are constrained. For example, storage capacity at the yard only provides enough space for about one-third of the total Blue Line fleet, as opposed to half of the fleet, which is more desirable for balanced operations. Additionally, the shop was built to accommodate 6-car train consist; however 8-car train consist currently operate on the system. There are also constraints in the layout of the facility, designed in the 1950s to primarily accommodate vehicular traffic, which does not focus on pedestrian- or bicycle-friendly access.

As part of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study, CTA is evaluating potential revisions to the footprint of the Forest Park Terminal, Yard, and Shop site as well as evaluating the feasibility of nearby parcels that may be able to accommodate the spatial demands of a modern rail shop and yard, including some sites in the Village of Maywood. At this early level of planning, CTA has not had any discussions with property owners, such as Com Ed; however, CTA will continue to study available options with the intent to make a recommendation for a proposed yard and shop location before the Vision Study concludes in 2014. If a new site were to be recommended for yard and shop modernization, it is possible that a short extension to the new yard and shop location would be included in the branch rehabilitation plans, in advance of plans related to an extension of the Blue Line to communities farther west. See General Comment #2 for more details related to project timing.

**Comment:**

67: How can we get involved to give citizen input to the Blue Line Extension west...?

**Response:**

During the remainder of the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study, stakeholders are welcome to provide comments relating to the existing Blue Line and to the potential Blue Line Extension. All comments will be reviewed and recorded in the project notes. Comments can be submitted in writing to Chicago Transit Authority, Attn: Ryan Mouw, Government and Community Relations Officer, 567 W Lake Street, Chicago, IL 60661 or via email to [bluestudy@transitchicago.com](mailto:bluestudy@transitchicago.com). All comments will be reviewed by the project team and included in the project documentation.

After the study is completed, comments can be submitted at any time via CTA customer service. CTA customer service directs these to the most appropriate internal departments for review and response where appropriate. CTA customer service can be reached at 1-888-YOUR-CTA (1-888-968-7282) or for TTY (Hearing Impaired) customer service at 1-888-CTA-TTY1 (1-888-282-8891). Comments may also be submitted through our online contact form at <http://www.transitchicago.com/feedback/>.

## **9. Other Transit Services and Multi-Modal Connections**

### **General Comment:**

CTA needs to coordinate with RTA, Pace, Metra, regional employers, or other groups to add more service, improved frequency, or new connections from the Blue Line or adjacent to the Blue Line.

### **Pertains to specific comments:**

1, 15, 23, 24, 27, 37, 51, 66

### **Response to Overall Category Comment:**

CTA seeks to utilize and integrate existing regional transit infrastructure to the greatest extent possible. CTA's bus and rail lines, Metra's commuter rail lines, and Pace's suburban bus services are interrelated. Through the Vision Study, CTA has evaluated connections between transit services that intersect the Blue Line Forest Park Branch. In particular, opportunities to improve bus transfers at interim stations along the branch, as well as the Forest Park Terminal, are included in this study.

As part of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study, CTA meets regularly with its counterparts at Metra, Pace, RTA, the Chicago Department of Transportation, the Illinois Department of Transportation, and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to promote coordination with all components of the region's transportation network. The CTA is also a member of the I-290 Study Transit Working Group working directly with IDOT and the region's transit agencies to coordinate the transit recommendations for the I-290 multi-modal improvements. The CTA seeks opportunities to connect with other transportation elements as opportunities permit.

While the specific operations of Pace and Metra, including service frequency and types of service offered, are beyond the purview of the CTA, related comments will be forwarded to Planning staff at the respective agencies.

## **10. Support for the Improvement of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch**

### **General Comment for Improvement of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch:**

There is support within the community for the improvement and rehabilitation of the Blue Line Forest Park Branch, especially the reduction of slow zones.

### **Pertains to Specific Comments:**

2, 8, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 31, 48

### **Response to Overall Category Comment:**

CTA recognizes the need for addressing slow zones and immediate maintenance needs on the Blue Line Forest Park Branch before funding is likely secured for the rehabilitation of the entire branch. To address slow zones and immediate needs, CTA Power and Way Maintenance have programmed weekday night maintenance work on the Forest Park Branch from spring 2014 through fall 2015.

## **11. I-290 Comments**

### **General Comment:**

Due to the overlap and coordination in the public outreach process, some comments directed to or received by CTA (either by carbon copy, or because some component of the comment involves CTA) are related to the I-290 expressway.

### **Pertains to Specific Comments:**

4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46, 48, 51, 52, 53, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65

### **Response to Overall Category Comment:**

These comments have been reviewed by CTA and included above where CTA responses are applicable, but are forwarded to IDOT for review and response through the I-290 EIS Study where appropriate.

## **12. General Customer Service Questions/Compliments/Complaints**

### **General Comment:**

We have some general comments related to CTA and/or CTA service.

### **Pertains to specific comments:**

16, 54

### **Response to Overall Category Comment:**

Some questions submitted to the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study team are outside the purview of the study itself. The study team notes these questions and comments for the record and has referred them to the CTA Customer Service Department for an independent response where contact information is available and filing through CTA's established Customer Service procedures.

### **Other Specific Comments on this Topic:**

#### **Comment:**

I would like to receive project updates.

#### **Pertains to specific comments:**

32, 33, 34, 35

#### **Response:**

Contact information provided has been used to add you to the project stakeholder list. Thank you for your interest in the Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study.

#### **Comment:**

17: On page 5 of the presentation, Oak Park station is not marked as having a "Street Easy to Cross (<=3 lanes)", but I think it should be marked as such (at the East Avenue entrance only).

#### **Response:**

Thank you for your comment. Future versions will be updated.