

Citizens for Appropriate Transportation

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www.CitizensForAppropriateTransportation.org

This letter is intended for inclusion in the Public Record

November 7, 2013

Chicago Transit Authority

Blue Line West Vision Study - ATTN: Ryan Mouw

567 W Lake Street

Chicago, IL 60661

SUBJECT: CTA Blue Line Vision Study

Dear Mr. Mouw:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the CTA Blue Line Vision Study.

Two Station Access Points are Better than One

The CTA's Compact Layout Conceptual Design centers each station under a bridge with a single access point. Stations at Austin, Oak Park, and Harlem now have access at both ends. Eliminating access from Lombard, East, and Circle (in Forest Park) would increase trip times and hurt businesses on Lombard and Harrison (The Arts District). Oak Park's population density (greater than 11,000 people per square mile) works well with transit. We are fortunate to have good transit service provided by the CTA's Blue and Green Lines, as well as Metra's UP-W Line.

Because the Corridor is multi-modal, joint planning and coordination are essential.

Every transportation mode (expressway, rail transit, buses, pedestrians, and bicyclists) plays a role. When each mode is designed to do what it does best, the transportation system works better and is efficient.

For IDOT, reconstructing and widening the expressway in the six-lane section is a priority. For the CTA, rebuilding the existing Forest Park Branch of the CTA is a priority; extending the Blue Line is not. Because of different priorities and funding programs, it is possible IDOT will improve the expressway years before a Blue Line extension occurs. Planning for transportation improvements and their impacts should account for different construction schedules. Corridor residents and businesses may not see the full benefits from multi-modal planning for years.

Major transportation investments create development opportunities.

Corridor communities have land that could be developed or redeveloped. Major transportation facilities such as the expressway, CTA Blue Line, and Metra commuter rail lines can promote development, shape desirable land use patterns, and allow higher density.

Do a Trends Analysis.

Trends change over time. Predicting the future is difficult. A Trends Analysis would help all of us understand how well (or poorly) Build Alternatives will work over time.

IDOT used a Market-Based Population and Employment Forecast in contrast to the Scenario-Based Forecast used by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to prepare the Go to 2040 Plan. IDOT's Build Alternatives could undermine the CMAP Recommendations in the Go To 2040 Plan.

Some demographic and technology trends are:

- Changes in trip generation rates
- Collision avoidance technology in new vehicles
- Baby Boomers retiring and driving less
- Reduction in Vehicle Miles of Travel
- Recent college graduates who are avoiding purchasing a car to pay down college debt
- Increasing fuel cost
- Growth in transit ridership, walking, bicycling
- More single driver trips
- Better parking management
- Growth in social media and networks
- Innovative car, taxi, and bicycle sharing using social networks
- Real time information
- Variable managed lane and parking pricing policies
- Changes in goods movement technologies

Do Scenario Planning.

Scenario Planning is intended to make long-term plans flexible by considering alternative futures, the consequences of each future, and how to respond to different futures.

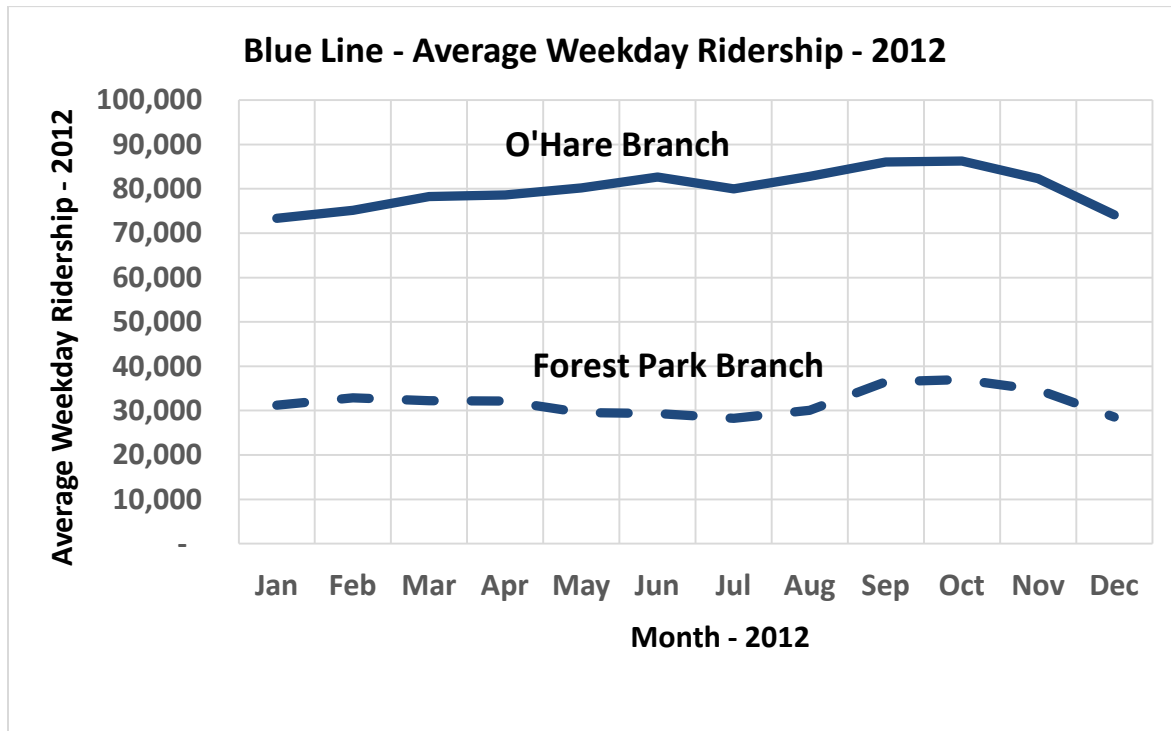
Based on the modeling analysis, IDOT believes that Build Alternatives with High Capacity Transit will work better than Build Alternatives without High Capacity Transit. So do we.

Consider Creative Funding Opportunities.

At the Town Hall Meeting hosted by State Senator Don Harmon on October 29, 2013, both IDOT Secretary Ann Schneider and CTA Vice President for Planning and Federal Affairs Michael McLaughlin spoke of the need for creative funding. Some ideas to consider are Value Capture whereby the CTA would capture some of the added value accrued to adjacent development by having a nearby CTA station.

Another idea is to reduce the fare on the Forest Park Branch because its ridership is lower than the O'Hare Branch of the Blue Line.

The chart below shows the Average Weekday Ridership by month for the Year 2012. Ideally, the O'Hare Branch and the Forest Park Branch would have roughly equal ridership. Looking at the chart, it is clear they do not. For every one rider on the Forest Park Branch, there are about 2.5 riders on the O'Hare Branch. This means the O'Hare Branch dictates how often the CTA runs trains and how many cars are in each train. Empty seats do not generate revenue for the CTA. The airlines and the hotels have learned how to set fares or room rates to fill empty seats or hotel rooms. The CTA discounted fares for riders on the Dan Ryan Red Line when they had to find alternative ways to travel during reconstruction.



We are pleased the CTA is working with IDOT on the Corridor. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please feel free to contact me via e-mail (rkuner@comcast.net) or telephone 708/848-0942 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Citizens for Appropriate Transportation

Rick Kuner
708/848-0942
rkuner@comcast.net

COPY TO: U.S. Federal Highway Administration – Illinois Division Office
U. S. Federal Transit Administration
Illinois Department of Transportation

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