

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **New Rock Island Line schedule finalized to meet demands of Positive Train Control**

*New schedule, to be tested as a pilot, begins Jan. 28*

CHICAGO (Jan 10, 2019) – Metra today unveiled a new Rock Island Line schedule that includes changes necessary for the new Positive Train Control (PTC) safety system, as well as some service enhancements such as new express trains. The new schedule will start on a trial basis on Jan. 28.

In crafting the new schedule, Metra considered the comments of more than 800 people who emailed the agency about the initial proposed schedule and made adjustments where possible. For example, the final schedule:

- Restores the departure times from LaSalle Street Station of outbound Train 405 to 2:55 p.m. and outbound Train 407 to 3:45 p.m.
- Turns inbound Train 408, arriving at LaSalle Street at 7:22 a.m., into an express train from Tinley Park-80<sup>th</sup> Avenue (with stops at Blue Island-Vermont St. and 35<sup>th</sup> St./“Lou” Jones)
- Retains the proposed train that arrives downtown before 6 a.m. (Train 400, arriving at LaSalle at 5:38 a.m.) and the proposed outbound mainline train that departs from LaSalle Street at 7:05 p.m. (Train 423)

The pilot schedule will go into effect on Jan. 28 and operations and ridership patterns will be evaluated over the next few months. Customers are urged to view the new schedule at [metrarail.com](http://metrarail.com) to see if their train or station stop is affected. No changes were made to the weekend schedule.

PTC is a federally mandated safety system that will automatically stop a train if the engineer fails to obey a signal or exceeds the speed limit. The system integrates GPS, trackside sensors and communications units, onboard computers and Metra’s centralized train dispatching system. Together, these components track trains and monitor the crew’s compliance with speed restrictions and signals. Although it can’t prevent all accidents, PTC increases safety by preventing train-to-train collisions, unauthorized entry by trains into work zones and derailments due to speeding or moving through misaligned track switches.

Under PTC, the crew of a train must initialize the system before each individual run. This includes entering information about the size and makeup of the train (because its weight affects its stopping distance) and any other details about conditions along the route (such as work zones or

speed restrictions) that could affect the safe operation of the train. The initialization process is expected to take about six minutes.

To handle as many passengers as it does during the morning rush period, Metra must quickly turn trains around at downtown stations and send them back out to make more inbound trips. The same applies to the evening rush period, as trains complete their trips to the suburbs and turn back to pick up more customers downtown. Metra calls this process “flipping” a train, and it will take longer because of PTC.

To flip a train, the engineer must move from the cab car to the locomotive or vice versa, and the crew must clear the train, perform a brake test and conduct a job briefing. With the added task of initializing the PTC system, these “flips” are expected to take more than 10 minutes, so the schedule of about a dozen trains were adjusted, and those changes, in turn, affected other trains on the schedule. A video explaining the changes can be found at [metrarail.com/PTC](http://metrarail.com/PTC).

Metra is responsible for creating the back office system and installing the equipment on board all Metra trains and along the tracks of the five routes it controls (Metra Electric, Rock Island, SouthWest Service and the Milwaukee District West and North). The freight companies that own the other six lines – BNSF Railway (the BNSF Line), Union Pacific Railroad (the three UP lines) and CN Railroad (Heritage Corridor and North Central Service) – are responsible for the trackside equipment and back offices for those routes.

One of the key features of PTC – and one of its biggest challenges – is that PTC systems must be interoperable between railroads. This means that Metra’s onboard equipment must be able to seamlessly communicate not only with Metra’s trackside and back office components, but with the freight railroads’ trackside and back office components, and vice versa.

PTC is already fully operational on the BNSF Line, and UP has begun implementation on its three lines. PTC will start on other Metra lines in 2019 and 2020. Similar schedule changes will be needed on other lines with tight flips as PTC is implemented.

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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 290,000 passenger trips each weekday.*

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