

From: Board Office <BoardOffice@transitchicago.com>

Date: January 5

Subject: Thank You for Your Feedback

Dear Riders and Public Transit Supporters,

As part of our 2024 budget hearing, the Chicago Transit Board received feedback from you regarding the need to take immediate action to improve service and increase rail operator hiring efforts.

We'd like to thank you for taking the time to contact us and share your feedback. The information customers share with us is valued and used as part of our planning for the year ahead.

We agree that more needs to be done to improve our services and increasing the number of rail operators. And we are making notable progress in getting there.

Central to improving our services is strengthening our workforce. In 2023, we hosted more than a dozen recruitment events, attracting more than 3,200 participants. In return, we've hired more employees this year than in any previous year – more than 2,000 (a nearly 70% increase over our average annual hire rate of 1,200).

As for increasing the number of rail operators, progress is being made on this front, with more to come in the year ahead.

Increasing our workforce of rail operators is a lengthy, complex process that cannot be expedited. Rail operators require the most extensive training of any CTA position, given the complexity and safety-sensitive nature of the job duties.

Rail operators are selected from within CTA's existing pool of personnel trained and serving as flaggers. This is to ensure that each candidate has been thoroughly trained on right-of-way safety, rail operations, and system communications with our control center. The basic training and experience in rail operations is an important prerequisite for becoming an operator--a standard that allows us to maintain the highest safety standards for both riders and employees. Training of rail operators takes approximately up to three months to complete.

This past year, we nearly **doubled** our rail operator training class sizes, from 12 students to 20. To handle the increased instruction demand, in 2023 we graduated a new class of rail instructors and brought back nine retired rail instructors. Additional new rail instructors will be trained and added in 2024 to further increase capacity.

As noted as part of our 2024 operating budget, we plan to add more rail service this year and to help ensure that happens, we are doubling our rail operator training slots – from 100 in 2023 to 200 this year. To support the goal of training 200 new rail operators, we are continuing our

aggressive push to recruit flaggers, the entry-level position required for anyone interested in becoming a rail operator. To this end, CTA's first job fair of the year on January 26 will be specifically focused on hiring rail flaggers at CTA; these efforts will continue at a pace to meet our goal to train 200 new rail operators for service.

Like other transit agencies across the country, a critical factor impacting efforts to strengthen the workforce in recent years has been employee attrition – largely due to retirement, but also separations. At CTA, we've also seen more rail operators transition or advance to higher level positions, versus resigning – a reflection of our commitment to building careers, not just providing jobs. And for those that are terminated, this is largely due to employees not maintaining the very high rail safety standards held by CTA, something we will not compromise.

We encourage you to monitor our progress using our interactive [Performance Metrics Dashboard](#), which tracks ridership, service performance, hiring efforts and more – with information updated monthly.

We appreciate your time, input and advocacy of transit services. Please know that we are committed to bringing you better services in 2024, while also continuing to make the best decisions and investments that provide you with the highest levels of customer comfort, modernization and equity.

Regards,

Chicago Transit Board