

What Chicagoland needs right now is a second Burnham Plan: a bold, yet achievable, vision that leverages our current legacy infrastructure and strategic investments to dramatically enhance our passenger rail network. More than just a vision, we need a road map that tells us where we want to be, where we need to go, and how we can get there.

Following the publishing of our 2034sight Plan in 2023, we've revisited the concept and created a new alternative called the CRCL Plan. Like the 2034sight Plan, this regional rail vision for Chicagoland creates a six-line network with over 140 stations by strategically connecting Metra's downtown terminals; unlike 2034sight, however, the CRCL Plan makes these connections with only half as much tunneling as the 2034sight Plan, creating a more economical option to #BuildTheTunnel.

The crux of these two regional rail visions is an entirely new mode of transit for Chicagoland: CrossTowners, a new type of train that's sleek, reliable, environmentally-friendly, and able to run quickly and efficiently all day long. CrossTowners complement – not compete with – our current rapid transit, commuter rail, and long-distance train services to serve as the nexus of a single, cohesive, seamless transit network for all of Chicagoland.

# What if...


...we basically doubled the number of 'L' stations in Chicagoland?

...we ran up to 8 trains an hour from Hyde Park to the north and northwest suburbs?

...we could operate an O'Hare Express service with no new infrastructure?

...almost every suburban train was an express, all day long?

...Soldier Field was the easiest stadium to get to, not the hardest?



Learn more about the CRCL Plan and CrossTowners on our website:

[yard-social.com/CRCL](https://yard-social.com/CRCL)

[yard-social.com/CrossTowners](https://yard-social.com/CrossTowners)



Our current commuter rail system is very good at bringing riders from the entire region all the way to the Loop's doorstep... and kicking them all out right at the edge of the Loop to fend for themselves to either walk or roll to their final destination, or figure out a challenging connection to the next leg of their transit trip. As a result, Metra is primarily seen exclusively as a suburbs-to-downtown service provider, and Chicagoland is at a loss for fast and frequent community-to-community trips beyond the reach of the existing CTA 'L' network. The solution is a new way of operating our existing commuter rail system called "regional rail". More than simply "running more trains", a regional rail network provides an innovative, cost-effective way to make our rail transit network operate far more efficiently and serving a much wider rider base than the traditional commuter model, with demonstrable benefits that reach every corner of the region by connecting our downtown rail terminals together to allow trains to operate not only to but through the urban core, creating an overlay a new network of train service on our existing infrastructure. Known by different names in different parts of the world including "S-Bahn" in central Europe, or "Réseau express" in the Francosphere, and more recently "Crossrail" in the United Kingdom, here in Chicagoland we can call them "CrossTowners".



### Metropolitan Rail

More "traditional" suburban rail service, but with higher speeds, simplified stopping patterns, and more consistent schedules serving riders all day – and all week – long.



### CrossTowners

"Regional Rail" transit service on existing railroads throughout the city and suburbs. Service operates all day long with single-seat trips to and through downtown.



### Rapid Transit

High-frequency, high-capacity elevated and subway trains connecting the Loop and the neighborhoods of the City of Chicago 24 hours a day.

These service paradigms, supplemented by the Midwest's network of long-distance and state-sponsored passenger trains centered around Chicago Union Station, would create a robust network of fast and frequent train service throughout Chicagoland by fully leveraging our region's existing strengths as the railroad hub of the United States. By maximizing the efficiency of our existing rail network rather than trying to build an entire network from scratch, we have the ability to make major strides in our region's environmental and economic sustainability goals with a particular focus on serving historically-underserved areas for a fraction of the cost of building a new network from scratch. The CRCL Plan calls for a three-phase process to make this vision a reality:

#### PHASE I

### A-2 Interlocking

Upgrade Metra's busy A-2 Interlocking near Western Avenue to reduce or eliminate most existing train congestion conflicts and create a Fulton Market "Superstation" for transfers and connections.

- A-2 Interlocking Modernization
- Fulton Market Superstation

#### PHASE II

### Chicago Union Station

Upgrade the existing thru tracks at Chicago Union Station to provide for fast and frequent CrossTowner service along the Chicago River, including Rock Island connections, without adding to existing train congestion.

- Rock Island (RI)-Chicago Union Station (CUS) Connector
- St. Charles Air Line (SCAL) Ramp Flyover

#### PHASE III

### #BuildTheTunnel

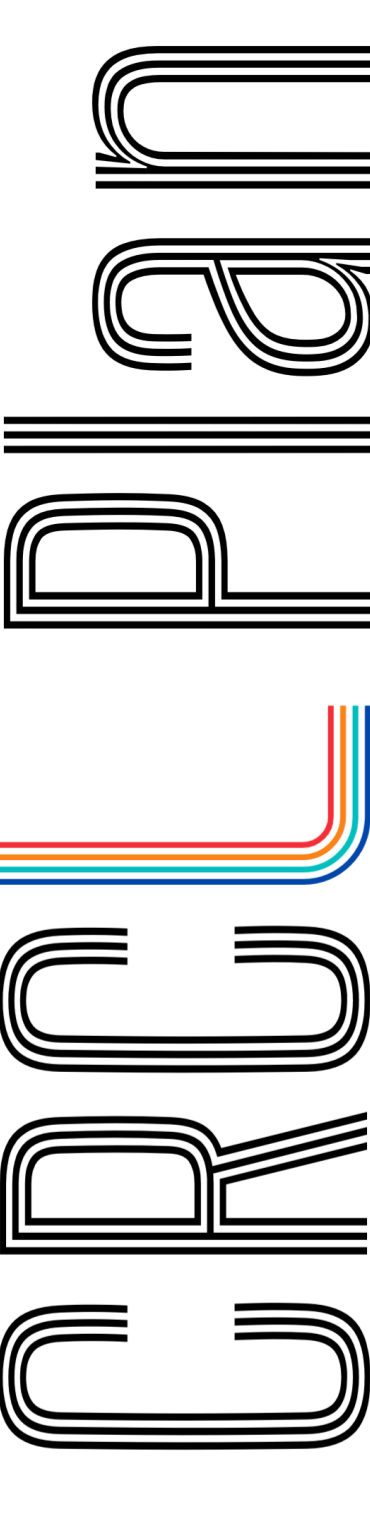
Build a new West Loop connection to expand Chicago Union Station's connectivity to Ogilvie Transportation Center, the 'L', and beyond by connecting the Metra Electric to the Union Pacific North/Northwest lines.


- Clinton-Roosevelt Connector Line (CRCL)

See other side for project details

### Additional Projects and Initiatives

- Unified Wayfinding Initiative**  
Unique station names, consistent line naming schemes, simplified signage, and more
- Peripheral Pulse Bus Routes**  
Circumferential, timed-transfer, limited-stop bus routes to make line-to-line connections
- Infill Stations and Service Extensions**  
Limited line extensions and new infill stations to maximize intermodal connections
- X7/X8 CrossTowner Shuttles**  
Suburban branch shuttle service to preserve headways without sacrificing frequency








STAR:LINE CHICAGO

# #BuildTheTunnel

## A New Plan for Regional Rail in Chicagoland



April 2025





Metropolitan Rail

Suburban service serving the collar counties

CrossTowner service allows rail service between downtown and the outer suburbs to make fewer stops with more consistent stopping patterns, which decreases travel times and increases service frequency.



All-day Regional Rail for Chicagoland

The core six CrossTowner lines each operate every half hour from early morning to late evening, relying on thru-running and interlining (overlapping) services to provide Rapid Transit-style service levels throughout the city.

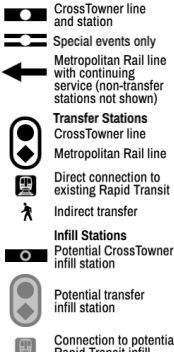


Rapid Transit

High-frequency subway and elevated trains

CrossTowners allow Chicagoland to dramatically expand the reach of our Rapid Transit network, leveraging existing heavy-rail infrastructure to serve many parts of the city and inner suburbs beyond the reach of 'L' service at a fraction of the cost of new lines or extensions.

Map Legend



CrossTowner Routings



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Stopping patterns and other operational details shown herein are entirely theoretical and do not necessarily demonstrate existing or future actual or planned stopping patterns or operational plans. This document was prepared entirely independently from any prior, existing, or future operational proposal. For official current Metra operational information, visit [metra.com](http://metra.com). For official current CTA operational information, visit [transitchicago.com](http://transitchicago.com). For official current Amtrak operational information, visit [amtrak.com](http://amtrak.com). For official plans and current official systemwide maps from the Regional Transportation Authority, visit [rtachicago.com](http://rtachicago.com).



Learn more at [yard-social.com/CrossTowners](http://yard-social.com/CrossTowners)

Join the conversation on social media:  
[@StarLineChicago](https://twitter.com/StarLineChicago).  
[bsky.social](https://twitter.com/bsky.social)  
[#CRCLPlan](https://twitter.com/CRCLPlan) - [#BuildTheTunnel](https://twitter.com/BuildTheTunnel)

**Phase III**  
**Clinton-Roosevelt Connector Line (CRCL)**

The keystone of the CRCL Plan, a new tunnel would connect the Metra Electric with the Union Pacific North and Union Pacific Northwest lines. Unlike the initial iteration of the 2034sight Plan, the Clinton-Roosevelt Connector Line would create a single regional rail hub at Union Station by connecting the Metra Electric line to the Union Pacific North and Northwest lines via a new subway under Roosevelt Road and Clinton Street. While this version of the tunnel does not create any new connections for River North or Streeterville, the Clinton-Roosevelt Connector would have a new direct connection to 'L' trains at the existing Roosevelt station and only requires four new underground stations. The CRCL provides the opportunity to interline service, tying together the various CrossTowner routes to provide Rapid Transit-style frequencies through downtown.

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