

# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023

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## RETURN TO WORK PLANS

The TMA service area is still very much in the pandemic recovery phase. Metra ridership has continued to tick upward, and more and more offices in the TMA service area are asking their employees to be physically present for specific portions of the week. A few big employers within the TMA service area have announced new policies vis-à-vis hybrid working (with attendant in-person expectations) that will bring people back to their offices on a more consistent basis.

The change is part of an ongoing national trend – employers around the country are becoming more definite in their return-to-work policies, institutionalizing hybrid work – but also asking that employees return to work in-person more frequently than in earlier phases of the pandemic and recovery. A [report on hybrid work](#) suggests that 87% of employees want hybrid work (vs. fully in office or fully remote), though there is a spectrum of needs and desires within the umbrella of ‘hybrid’ work.

If your company is changing their in-person work expectations, and you are interested in shuttle service, please reach out to the TMA so that you can join or, if your company is already a member, we can accommodate your commuter-support needs!

## TMA SHUTTLE RETURNS!

The TMA shuttle was suspended for a long time as businesses in the TMA service area went, and then remained, fully remote in recognition of the coronavirus pandemic. As many businesses are still operating with a reduced on-site workforce, the TMA is offering a modest service relative to 2019 and is serving specific worksites with a larger in-office contingent. However, if your office, unit or team is returning to work for special events or on an ad-hoc basis, the shuttle remains a great option to allow people to commute via Metra. There are two shuttles running, serving businesses who have opted in. If you are thinking of hiring interns or other junior staff, particularly from outside of the region, the shuttle is a great way to bolster recruitment and help understand their relocation options.

As of writing, there are two shuttles serving a slate of businesses in the north suburbs, with capacity to add more. Speak to your Human Resources department if you would like more information about schedules or about how to take advantage of the shuttle.



## METRA SERVICE ENHANCED

Metra ridership plummeted in the early days of the pandemic and has lagged behind private auto use, CTA and Pace in the pandemic recovery phase. Although ridership has not recovered from pre-pandemic days, Metra use continues to trend upwards. In recognition of returning ridership, Metra has revised their schedule and is now offering more trains to and from the north suburbs every day. Check [metra.com](https://metra.com) to see if taking Metra will work for you as you make your return to work plans!

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## S DEERFIELD COMMUTING STUDY

With help from an Invest in Cook grant, the TMA has undertaken a study of commuting patterns around the Lake Cook Metra station, in particular the stretch of Lake Cook Road between Waukegan Road and Hwy 94. The report found return-to-work patterns, which the TMA had taken to be somewhat settled, are evolving season to season; that many employees live in Deerfield or the surrounding communities and that those with short commutes are much more likely to be working in office; and that a relatively small proportion of commuters live along the Milwaukee District-North corridor (the Metra line serving the Lake Cook Metra). The TMA is working with the Village of Deerfield, the DBR Chamber of Commerce, Cook County, and the TMA's selected consultant, Sam Schwartz Consulting, to develop additional policies and programs to support commuters to Lake Cook Road.

## THE BIG EVENT

Lake County Partners' Big Event is back. On the morning of Tuesday, May 2, the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort will host keynote speaker David Epstein, and will also provide an opportunity to network and info-share with other Lake County businesses and employers. [Register here](#).

## DEERFIELD'S PLANNING COMMISSION

A few companies within the TMA service area have recently announced plans to consolidate their office footprint: Walgreens vacated land south of Lake Cook Road earlier in the pandemic and recently received planning permission for changes to 100 Wilmot Road. The changes to the building are intended to help Walgreens to use its footprint more efficiently given the company's institutionalization of hybrid work.

The Village of Deerfield Plan Commission met in February to discuss the future of 1 Baxter Parkway – there is a proposal to demolish the existing structures and build two industrial spaces (likely warehousing/) and then a 156,000 SF recreational facility, which may potentially be leased by the Deerfield Parks District. Baxter will continue to occupy a smaller footprint within the Lake Cook Service area.

The Village is also in the process of creating a tax-increment financing district (TIF District) for 44.5 acres of property on the south side of Lake Cook Road. The Village has developed a TIF eligibility report for the site that is viewable [at this link](#).

More information about the TIF in the context of Deerfield's planning efforts is available [at this link](#).

## NEW FARE PRODUCTS ON CTA, PACE & METRA

In 2021, all three regional transit agencies – Metra, CTA & Pace – introduced the Regional Connect Pass, which can be coupled with Metra's 'Super Saver' \$100 monthly pass. The new fare products reduced the cost of unlimited transit rides by \$30 month, and allowed for greater flexibility.

In February 2023, the transit agencies announced that all new 1-Day and 3-Day unlimited ride passes will now apply to both Pace and CTA services, with free transfers between them. Additionally, the \$5 surcharge on a 7-Day pass has been removed.

If you were a regular CTA/Metra commuter prior to the pandemic, you may remember the Link-Up and PlusBus passes, which have now been superseded by the Super Saver pass. This represents a significant savings relative to old fare models.

If you want to learn more about changes and accomplishments at Pace, Metra and CTA, see [this link](#) for more information.