

DATA CENTERS · ISSUE #5

RIDE THE L

Adult / Community Edition · Prestige

CREDITS

Ride the L · Data Centers #5 · Adult / Community edition
Story and production: GOTB Consulting, Chicago
Lead: Mateo Olmedo · Heroes: Gridline, The Auditor, Commons · On screen: Lena
Ashgrove, Channel 5 · Cameo: Dess

AI-GENERATED ART, FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

All characters, the town of Prairie Bend and Channel 5 are fictional. Any resemblance to real people is a coincidence. No real logos are shown. Real places, agencies and utilities are named only where public sources are cited; officials appear by role.

Every number was checked against public sources (see Sources). Disputed points carry a CONTESTED stamp and the strongest case on each side.

Nonpartisan: no parties, no politicians.

Track safety: the third rail carries 600 volts. Never go on the tracks; stay behind the platform edge line.

Lettering: Bebas Neue, Oswald, Kalam, Libre Baskerville, Courier Prime, Special Elite (set in Pillow; no fonts embedded).

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THE CAST



MATEO OLMEDO

Two chairs, one level.
Gives each side its
strongest voice.



GRIDLINE

Lineworker hero. Every
train is load on the
grid.



THE AUDITOR

Sees it, reports it.
Cannot fix it alone.



COMMONS

Night crews and riders.
Lantern up.



FACT FILE · 01



Framing panel: the two chairs present the strongest case on each side. Figures appear on the panels that follow, each with its source.

Source: GOTB framing (no statistic)

GOTB / DC FILE



FACT FILE · 02

CTA serves Chicago and 35 suburbs; service population 3.4 million (2020 Census). 1,660 rail cars, 8 rail lines, 224.1 miles of track, 146 stations; trains make about 2,374 trips a day.

Source: CTA, "Facts at a Glance"

GOTB / DC FILE

STATION SCREEN



FACT FILE · 03



VERIFIED

2025 average weekday riders: bus 621,159; rail 421,346; total 1,042,505. 2025 annual: rail 138.4 million; total 338.0 million.

Source: CTA, "Facts at a Glance"

GOTB / DC FILE

HEARING ROOM



MATEO

CHAIR ONE: TRANSIT IS THE CITY'S SPINE, FUND IT.



MATEO

CHAIR TWO: PROVE THE MONEY MOVES RIDERS BEFORE YOU ASK FOR MORE.



MATEO

BOTH GET THEIR STRONGEST VOICE.

FACT FILE · 04

Framing panel: the two chairs present the strongest case on each side. Figures appear on the panels that follow, each with its source.

Source: GOTB framing (no statistic)

GOTB / DC FILE



GRIDLINE

FIRST L: 1892. LOOP ELEVATED: 1897.



GRIDLINE

STATE STREET SUBWAY: 1943.



GRIDLINE

STILL 600 VOLTS ON THE THIRD RAIL,
STILL ON OLD STEEL.

FACT FILE · 05



Dates: horse cars 1859; first rail line June 6, 1892; Loop Elevated opened Oct. 12, 1897; State Street Subway Oct. 17, 1943; CTA became the operator Oct. 1, 1947. The electrified third rail carries 600 volts used to propel trains, a level of electricity that is almost always lethal; riders must never enter the tracks.

Source: CTA, "Facts at a Glance"; CTA press release, "New CTA Campaign Highlights Dangers of Going on Tracks"

GOTB / DC FILE

THE CUTAWAY



THE AUDITOR

35.8 MILES ELEVATED, 11.4 SUBWAY,
35 AT GRADE.



THE AUDITOR

EVERY MILE NEEDS INSPECTION,
POWER AND CREWS.



FACT FILE · 06

35.8 miles of elevated structure; 11.4 miles of subway;
35.0 miles at grade.

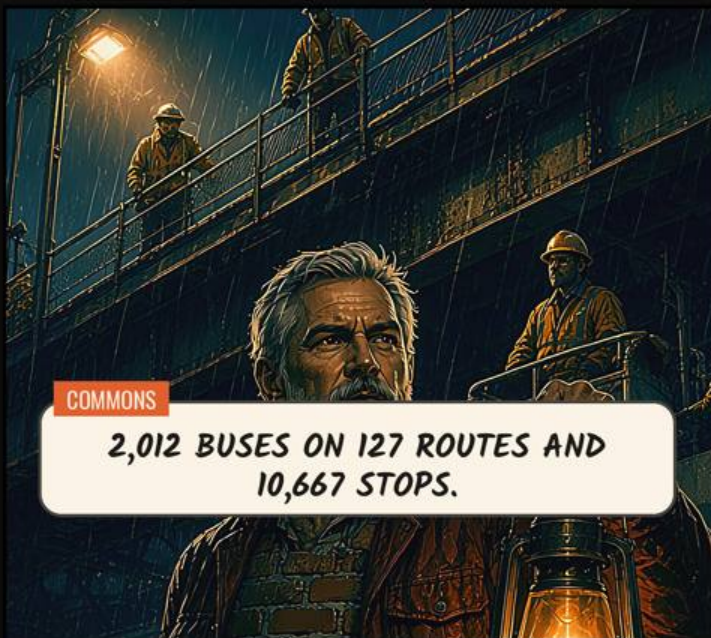
Source: CTA, "Facts at a Glance"

GOTB / DC FILE



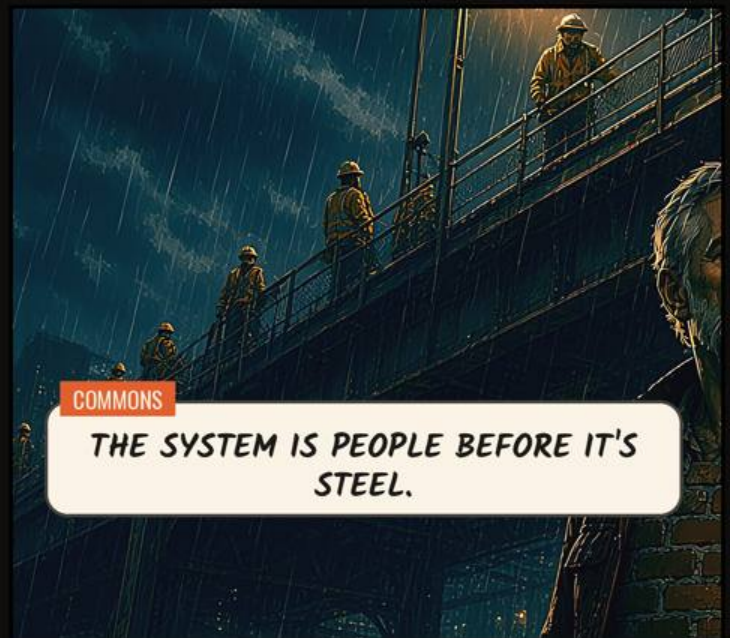
COMMONS

10,869 POSITIONS.



COMMONS

2,012 BUSES ON 127 ROUTES AND
10,667 STOPS.



COMMONS

THE SYSTEM IS PEOPLE BEFORE IT'S
STEEL.

FACT FILE · 07



2,012 buses, 127 bus routes, 10,667 bus stops; 10,869 employee positions.

Source: CTA, "Facts at a Glance"

GOTB / DC FILE

NATIONAL RIDERSHIP



FACT FILE · 08

Americans took 34 million transit trips each weekday in 2023; ridership was 73% of pre-pandemic levels in 2023 (down as much as 80% in April 2020).

Source: ASCE 2025 Report Card, "Transit"

GOTB / DC FILE



FACT FILE · 09



VERIFIED

2026 operating budget \$2.231 billion; capital budget \$1.505 billion.

Source: CTA, "Facts at a Glance"

GOTB / DC FILE

CHAIR ONE



MATEO

CHAIR ONE: THE 2021 LAW SENT TRANSIT \$108 BILLION, AND ENGINEERS STILL SEE A \$152 BILLION GAP AND \$618 BILLION IN NEEDS THROUGH 2033.



FACT FILE · 10



The 2021 infrastructure law gave transit \$108 billion; a \$152 billion 10-year funding gap remains; \$618 billion in needs through 2033.

Source: ASCE 2025 Report Card, "Transit"

GOTB / DC FILE

CHAIR TWO



MATEO

CHAIR TWO: HALF THE COUNTRY SAYS
ITS SERVICE ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH.



MATEO

RIDERS VOTE WITH THEIR FEET.



MATEO

RELIABILITY FIRST, THEN EXPANSION.

FACT FILE · 11



51% of Americans report inadequate bus, subway or commuter bus service; 42% say they have access.

Source: ASCE 2025 Report Card, "Transit"

GOTB / DC FILE

TO THE AIRPORT



DESS

THE BLUE LINE REACHES THE BIG AIRPORT AND THE ORANGE LINE MIDWAY.



DESS

TRANSIT AND AIR ARE ONE NETWORK.

FACT FILE · 12

The Blue Line reaches the big airport; the Orange Line reaches Midway.

Source: CTA, "Facts at a Glance"

GOTB / DC FILE

GRIDLINE

EVERY TRAIN IS LOAD ON THE SAME
GRID AS THE DATA CENTERS.



GRIDLINE

PLAN THEM TOGETHER OR FIGHT OVER
THE SAME TRANSFORMERS.



FACT FILE · 13



Framing panel: no new statistic on this page. Figures appear on the panels around it, each with its source.

Source: GOTB framing (no statistic)

GOTB / DC FILE



FACT FILE · 14



Framing panel: no new statistic on this page. Figures appear on the panels around it, each with its source.

Source: GOTB framing (no statistic)

GOTB / DC FILE

LENA · ON SCREEN

NEXT ISSUE: THE CITY'S TWO
AIRPORTS.



FACT FILE · 15



The Blue Line reaches the big airport; the Orange Line reaches Midway.

Source: CTA, "Facts at a Glance"

GOTB / DC FILE



MATEO

TWO CHAIRS, ONE LEVEL.



MATEO

MOVE PEOPLE IN THE OPEN, AND
BOTH CAN SIT DOWN.

GOTB Consulting, Chicago: infrastructure and procurement for the power, water and public works these projects depend on.

BY THE NUMBERS

8 LINES · 146 STATIONS

224.1 miles of track, 1,660 rail cars, about 2,374 train trips a day. (CTA)

421,346 · 1,042,505

2025 average weekday rail rides; total bus + rail rides. (CTA)

1892 · 1897 · 1943

First L line; Loop Elevated; first subway. (CTA)

10,869

CTA employee positions: drivers, mechanics, track crews. (CTA)

\$108B · \$152B

Transit money in the 2021 infrastructure law; 10-year gap engineers still see. (ASCE 2025)

600 VOLTS

On the third rail. Almost always lethal. Never enter the tracks. (CTA)

TWO CHAIRS, ONE LEVEL

The strongest case on each side, labeled. Nonpartisan.

FUND IT

Transit is the city's spine: a million rides a weekday, and a \$152 billion national gap that won't close itself.

FIX HOW IT'S RUN

Prove each dollar moves riders. 51% say service isn't good enough; reliability first, then expansion.

PLAN WITH THE GRID

Every train is load on the same grid as the data centers. Plan power for both, in the open.

WHAT BOTH SHARE

Trains that come on time, crews who go home safe.

YOUR TURN

What would make your ride better? _____

SOURCES

Full list with fact IDs: FACT_BASE.md and NUMBER_CHECK.md (GOTB internal).

CTA

CTA, "Facts at a Glance"

ASCE 2025 REPORT CARD

ASCE 2025 Report Card, "Transit"

CTA PRESS RELEASE

CTA press release, "New CTA Campaign Highlights Dangers of Going on Tracks"

ABOUT GOTB CONSULTING

WHO WE ARE

A Chicago firm working on infrastructure and procurement for the systems communities depend on.

DATA CENTERS

Siting, delivery and community questions.

POWER

Grid connections, substations and lines.

WATER

Supply, treatment and cooling.

PUBLIC WORKS

Roads, pipes and public spaces.

THE END



TWO CHAIRS, ONE LEVEL.

Move people in the open, and both can sit down.

GOTB CONSULTING · CHICAGO

Data centers · Power · Water · Public works

AI-generated art, fictional characters