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**MAYOR EMANUEL, GOVERNOR QUINN ANNOUNCE COMPREHENSIVE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
FOR CTA BLUE LINE O'HARE BRANCH**

"Your New Blue" includes station, track upgrades; largest Blue Line investment in 30 years

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Governor Pat Quinn today announced a comprehensive improvement plan for the Chicago Transit Authority's Blue Line O'Hare Branch—an overhaul that will provide faster travel times and updated stations while creating more than 1,300 good-paying jobs.

The \$492 million plan, called *Your New Blue*, includes several track and station improvement projects along a 12.5-mile stretch of the Blue Line O'Hare Branch between the Grand and Cumberland stations, as well as upgrades to the signal system between the Jefferson Park and O'Hare stations.

These improvements will provide faster, more comfortable and more reliable commutes for the more than 80,000 customers who each weekday use stations along the branch, which had 25 million rides last year. This project is the largest comprehensive investment for this line since the O'Hare branch extension was built from Jefferson Park to O'Hare in 1983.

"Like the Red Line South project we just completed on time and within budget, this Blue Line plan is far-reaching and long overdue, and will help meet increasing demand," said Mayor Emanuel. "This plan represents a huge investment in CTA riders and visitors traveling to Chicago via O'Hare and many vibrant communities along the North and Northwest Sides. It's also part of our latest efforts to modernize our transit system for the 21st century."

"Strategic investments to build 21st century transportation system throughout Illinois are a key part of my jobs agenda," Governor Quinn said. "By modernizing the Blue Line we are creating more than 1,000 jobs while making it faster, safer and more reliable for the millions of travelers that use it every year."

"The Blue Line is often the first or final impression of Chicago for the millions of tourists who rely on it to reach O'Hare," said U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin. "Several years ago, the City made significant progress updating the Blue Line and its aging track and stations with the help of federal Recovery

Act dollars. Today's announcement renews the federal commitment to the Blue Line and the crucial role it plays linking O'Hare, downtown Chicago, and scores of neighborhoods in between. I commend Mayor Emanuel for his commitment to mass transit and look forward to many trips on the new and improved Blue Line."

Among the four-year plan's highlights:

- Extensive station renovations at the Grand, Chicago, Division, Damen, California, Logan Square and Jefferson Park stations.
- Concrete platform repairs and installation of a new elevator at the Addison station to make it ADA accessible.
- Repairs at the Irving Park, Montrose, Harlem and Cumberland stations.
- Track improvements to eliminate slow zones in the Dearborn Subway (Grand to Division) and Milwaukee Subway (Damen to Belmont).
- Track signal improvements between O'Hare and Jefferson Park, which will improve speed of travel.
- Traction power upgrades to improve service and reliability.
- Installation of new water management systems and repairs to ensure dry and clean subway stations.
- Special track improvements near the O'Hare station and in the Rosemont rail yard to help reduce delays and provide for more efficient operations.
- Upgrade of wireless infrastructure in the subway tunnels to provide customers and workers with faster and more reliable voice, data and web service in the subway. Current infrastructure was built in 2005 and is inadequate and outdated.

"Over the last several weeks, we've already seen the positive impacts the Red Line South reconstruction is having on customers' commutes," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "This Blue Line plan will provide the same kind of customer-friendly improvements that lead to faster commutes and a better overall rider experience. Over the next four years, customers will see the benefits of this program incrementally, which will provide a better commuting experience in the near and long term."

Ridership on the O'Hare Branch is growing rapidly, with more than 25 million station entries in 2012. Weekday ridership has grown 25 percent over the past five years, and 33 percent over the past 10 years—outpacing the growth of the rail system as a whole. Annual ridership on the O'Hare branch increased by 6.3 million rides over the past 10 years, the second highest for any branch after Red North Main, which added 7 million rides.

The stations receiving the most significant upgrades have experienced some of the biggest ridership jumps on the Blue Line O'Hare branch. The O'Hare Branch's largest ridership growth has occurred between Logan Square and Grand, which has increased 44 percent over the past five years, and almost 60 percent over the past 10 years—making it the fastest-growing section among all branches of the system.

Funding for *Your New Blue* is expected to come from local, state and federal sources. The first projects are expected to get under way in 2014. Project schedules are still being finalized, but the project is expected to begin with track work, following by station renovations, power upgrades and then signal improvements.

The Blue Line plan is part of more than \$4 billion in transit improvements announced by Mayor Emanuel since taking office in 2011. In addition to the recently completed \$425 million Red Line South reconstruction, the CTA in 2014 will begin building a new terminal at 95th Street Red Line (\$240 million); rebuilding the Wilson station on the Red Line (\$203 million) and working with CDOT to build a new Cermak-McCormick Place elevated Green Line station (\$50 million) by the end of 2014. Funding for the Red Line projects is part of more than \$1 billion in federal, state and local funding announced in late 2011 by Governor Pat Quinn and Mayor Emanuel for the Red and Purple lines. The Governor's *Illinois Jobs Now!* capital program is providing more than \$700 million of the total investment.

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