

2025 Capital Asset Condition – Summary Report

Northeastern Illinois
May 2025

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Overview

The 2025 Capital Asset Condition Report provides the first comprehensive update of the region's transit asset data since 2016. Conducted by the RTA in partnership with CTA, Metra, and Pace, the report assesses the physical condition and investment needs of public transit infrastructure in northeastern Illinois. The data used in the report is the result of extensive work by each Service Board's staff to conduct asset condition assessments, develop replacement and construction cost estimates, and create detailed inventory of the vast and complex capital asset components that make up the infrastructure and vehicles of the region's bus and rail systems.

Key findings

- The total replacement value of all regional transit assets is \$117.5 billion.
- 25% of assets are beyond their useful life, down from 31% in 2016.
- The capital investment backlog is \$30 billion.
- Achieving a full State of Good Repair by 2045 requires \$4 billion in annual investment.
- Current capital funding averages only \$981 million per year, leaving a significant gap.

Progress since 2016

Significant capital improvements have occurred, supported by federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding and the state's 2019 Rebuild Illinois bond program.

Notable projects in recent years improving the state of good repair backlog include:

- CTA's Red Purple Modernization (RPM) project fully replacing a segment of the 100-year-old four-track concrete embankment as well as new ADA accessible stations on the Red Line.
- Metra's program to rebuild, with full ADA access, 100-year-old stations along the Metra Electric line.
- Pace's new Plainfield garage modernizes bus maintenance capabilities, allowing expansion of I-55 bus-on-shoulder operations and providing for conversion to electric zero-emission buses.

In 2019, the State of Illinois provided two important sources of capital funding for state of good repair projects: the 2020-2024 Rebuild Illinois state bond program provided \$520 million annually to regional transit capital investment, and the on-going PAYGO funding program from gas tax revenue provided \$227 million annually between 2020 and 2024 and is projected to contribute \$290 million annually over the next five years.

The threat ahead

The 2019 Rebuild Illinois capital bond program is fully granted. Without renewed state capital investment, the percentage of assets beyond useful life will increase, reversing recent gains and risking safety, reliability, and accessibility.

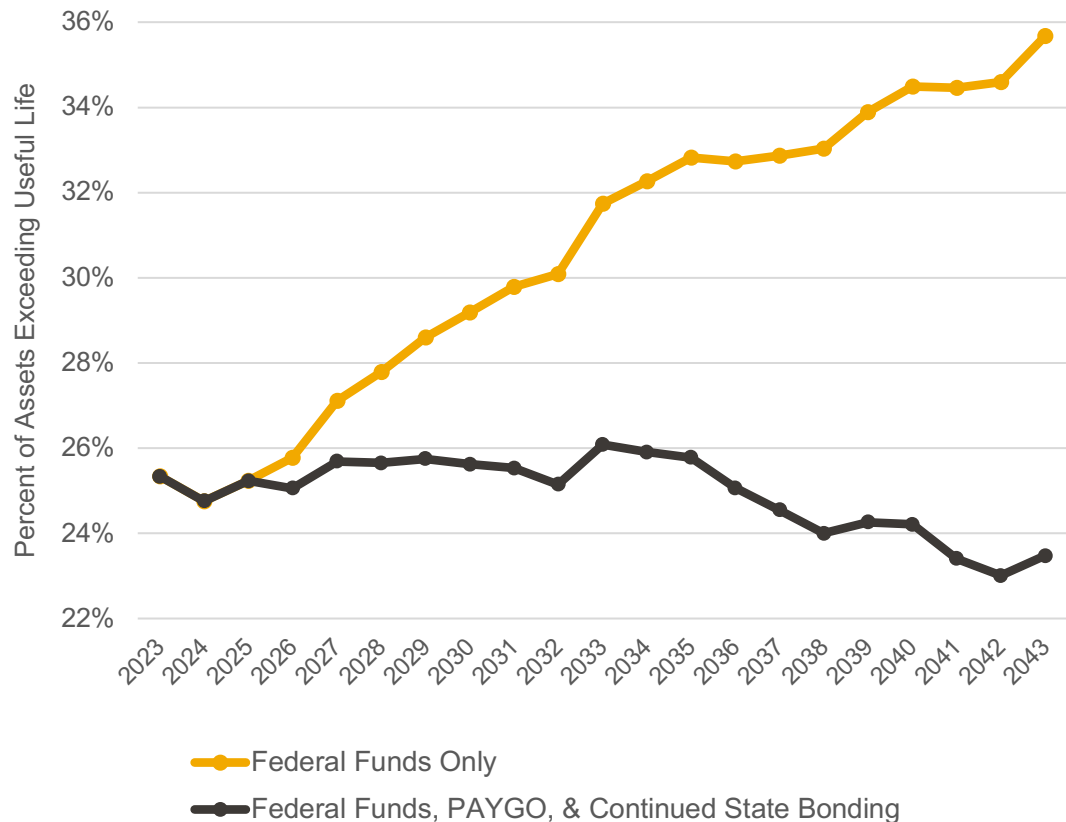


Recommendation

RTA urges Illinois leaders to adopt a consistent, long-term state capital program that matches the scale and urgency of the region's transit reinvestment needs. Sustained state support is vital to protect past investments, ensure safe and reliable infrastructure, and keep northeastern Illinois moving forward

Figure 1 projects the Percent of Assets Exceeding Useful Life (PAEUL) for the next 20 years with and without continued state funding. Only with a perpetual Illinois capital program—one which is consistently renewed—will we be able to maintain assets in the condition they are today. With new uncertainty at the federal level, state resources are even more critical.

Figure 1 Percent of Assets Exceeding Useful Life by Funding Source



Background

The RTA plays a critical role in overseeing the financial health of the region's transit system and ensuring that the Service Boards—CTA, Metra, and Pace—have adequate resources to maintain and operate their infrastructure. Recognizing the importance of long-term capital planning, the 2008 RTA Act¹ formally charged the agency with developing strategies to preserve the condition of transit assets across northeastern Illinois.

In response, RTA launched a comprehensive capital asset condition assessment program in 2009. The primary goals were to estimate total infrastructure needs for each Service Board and establish a consistent, data-driven framework to prioritize capital investments. This effort included the development of the Capital Optimization Support Tool (COST)—a strategic decision-making platform that uses asset age, condition, rehabilitation requirements, and replacement costs to project future reinvestment needs.

The last major output was the 2016 Capital Asset Condition Assessment Report, which documented asset conditions as of 2015. However, the program paused in 2017 following the issuance of the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Asset Management (TAM) Rule (49 CFR part 625), which required each Service Board to develop and report individual asset management plans and datasets to the National Transit Database (NTD).

To align with the new federal requirements while maintaining regional oversight, RTA transitioned its program into a Strategic Asset Management (SAM) framework. SAM allows the agency to monitor the collective condition of transit assets as a unified regional portfolio and supports performance-based capital planning. In 2021, the RTA Board adopted a Performance-Based Capital Allocation policy to guide distribution of state and federal funds based on proportion of need required to achieve a state of good repair for a 20-year horizon. That same year, RTA convened a working group with the Service Boards to begin updating the asset inventory from the 2015 baseline. While the NTD served as a starting point, extensive supplemental work was required to ensure data completeness, consistency, and accuracy. The updated COST database now reflects contributions from detailed condition inspections, engineering analyses, and improved cost estimations from each agency.

In 2023, RTA engaged Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc. to support the technical refinement of the COST tool, ensure consistency across Service Boards and peer agencies, and align with FTA guidance. This collaboration also established a framework for annual updates to the asset database, supporting more effective planning, accountability, and advocacy for capital needs across the region.

¹ (70 ILCS 3615/) Regional Transportation Authority Act, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs5.asp?ActID=984&ChapterID=15>, last accessed, May 7, 2020.

Asset Condition Assessment

The region's assets are organized by Asset Categories. These categories, along with the major components that are included in each category, are:

- Facilities (bus garages, rail shops and yards, maintenance facilities, bus turnarounds)
- Guideway (track, structure)
- Stations (rail stations, major bus centers, park 'n ride lots)
- Systems (train control, traction power, communications, revenue collection)
- Vehicles (buses, railcars, locomotives, and non-revenue vehicles such as maintenance vehicles and supervisor cars)

The FTA TAM process provides an asset condition rating system based on the condition and remaining useful life of each asset, on a 1 to 5 scale, shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Asset Condition Rating System

Condition	Definition
5 (Excellent)	No visible defects, new or near new condition, may still be under warranty if applicable
4 (Good)	Good condition, but no longer new, may have some slightly defective or deteriorated component(s), but is overall functional
3 (Adequate)	Moderately deteriorated or defective components; but has not exceeded useful life
2 (Marginal)	Defective or deteriorated component(s) in need of replacement; exceed useful life
1 (Poor)	Critically damaged components(s) or in need of immediate repair; well past useful life

2025 Asset Condition Findings

The 2025 assessment reflects the NTD data for report year 2023 (submitted to NTD in 2024) supplemented with additional asset data for categories not fully reported through the NTD process, and where newer information was available as of February 2025. To be consistent with the NTD report year, values are reported in year 2023 dollars (\$2023).

In comparison with the 2016 Asset Condition Assessment Report, the 2025 assessment includes the Service Board asset data current as of February 2025 and reflects assets replaced, rehabilitated, or now advanced in age from the inventory that was reported in 2016 and measured at the time in 2015 dollars (\$2015). The new asset data also reflects new comprehensive inspections and inventory updates, so direct comparisons between the current report and the 2016 report should be made with care.

Replacement Cost

Replacement Cost of the region's transit assets is provided in Table 2. The replacement cost is the cost for in-kind replacement of every asset in the region's transit system—the buses, trains, tracks, signal and power systems, track structure, stations, maintenance shops and support vehicles. This provides the scale of value to the region of the transit infrastructure which has been put in place over generations. This investment has enabled transit to function and provide economic and mobility benefits to the region. The replacement cost is estimated at \$117.5 billion, detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 Regional Transit Asset Replacement Cost

Service Board	Category	Billions	Share of Regional Total
CTA	Facilities	\$8.6	7.3%
	Guideway	\$33.6	28.6%
	Stations	\$17.2	14.6%
	Systems	\$6.8	5.8%
	Vehicles	\$11.0	9.3%
	Total	\$77.2	65.7%

Service Board	Category	Billions	Share of Regional Total
Metra	Facilities	\$2.4	2.0%
	Guideway	\$19.6	16.7%
	Stations	\$3.7	3.2%
	Systems	\$3.3	2.8%
	Vehicles	\$8.1	6.9%
	Total	\$37.1	31.6%
Pace	Facilities	\$1.3	1.1%
	Stations	\$0.3	0.2%
	Systems	\$0.2	0.2%
	Vehicles	\$1.4	1.2%
	Total	\$3.1	2.7%
Region	Facilities	\$12.2	10.4%
	Guideway	\$53.2	45.3%
	Stations	\$21.2	18.0%
	Systems	\$10.4	8.8%
	Vehicles	\$20.5	17.4%
	Total	\$117.5	100.0%

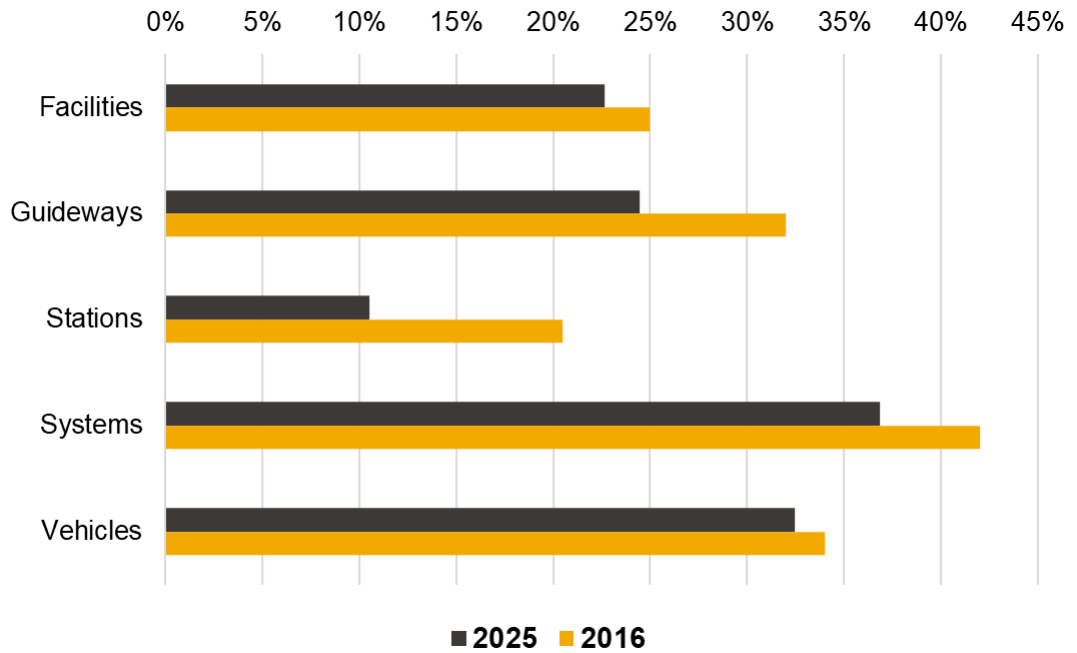
State of Good Repair

State of Good Repair (SGR) is defined as when all assets are replaced once they reach useful life, all rehabs are performed, and capital maintenance is fully funded on an annual basis. In terms of the condition rating scale, when an asset reaches its useful life, it is rated 2.5. The percent of assets (by replacement value) beyond their useful life (rated 2.5 or below) is shown in Figure 2.

Capital funding does make a difference. The region has benefited from the recent state bonds and PAYGO and federal IIGA. As shown in Figure 2, since the 2016 report, the percent of assets (by replacement value) that are past their useful life has decreased for all asset categories. For the region, in 2016 we found that 31% of total assets were beyond their useful life¹; today that number is improved, measuring at 25%

¹ 2016 Capital Asset Condition Assessment Report, p. 23

Figure 2 Percent of Assets Exceeding Useful Life, 2025 vs 2016 Reports



Investment Backlog

Investment Backlog is defined as the cost of replacing and repairing assets that are beyond their useful life (i.e. a rating below 2.5). The backlog for the region stands at \$30 billion, shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Investment Backlog

Service Board	Category	Billions	Share of Regional Total
CTA	Facilities	\$2.72	9.13%
	Guideway	\$9.39	31.54%
	Stations	\$1.59	5.34%
	Systems	\$2.48	8.34%
	Vehicles	\$2.82	9.46%
	Total	\$18.99	63.81%
Metra	Facilities	\$0.05	0.18%
	Guideway	\$4.53	15.23%
	Stations	\$0.63	2.11%
	Systems	\$1.46	4.92%
	Vehicles	\$3.55	11.94%
	Total	\$10.23	34.38%

Service Board	Category	Billions	Share of Regional Total
Pace	Facilities	\$0.00	0.00%
	Stations	\$0.05	0.17%
	Systems	\$0.10	0.32%
	Vehicles	\$0.39	1.32%
	Total	\$0.54	1.81%
Region	Facilities	\$2.77	9.31%
	Guideway	\$13.92	46.77%
	Stations	\$2.27	7.62%
	Systems	\$4.04	13.58%
	Vehicles	\$6.76	22.72%
	Total	\$29.76	100.00%

20-Year Investment Needed to Achieve State of Good Repair

The 20-year Investment Needed to Achieve State of Good Repair is the capital investment needed over the next 20 years to have all assets in a state of good repair at the end of that period. In addition to replacing the current backlog, this investment also includes replacing and repairing assets that will age out and need investment during that 20-year period; for example a bridge today that has a condition rating of 3.0 may degrade to 2.5 within the next 20 years and need replacement. A 20-year timeframe is used for illustrative purposes and as a benchmark useful as a frame of reference and for comparative purposes.

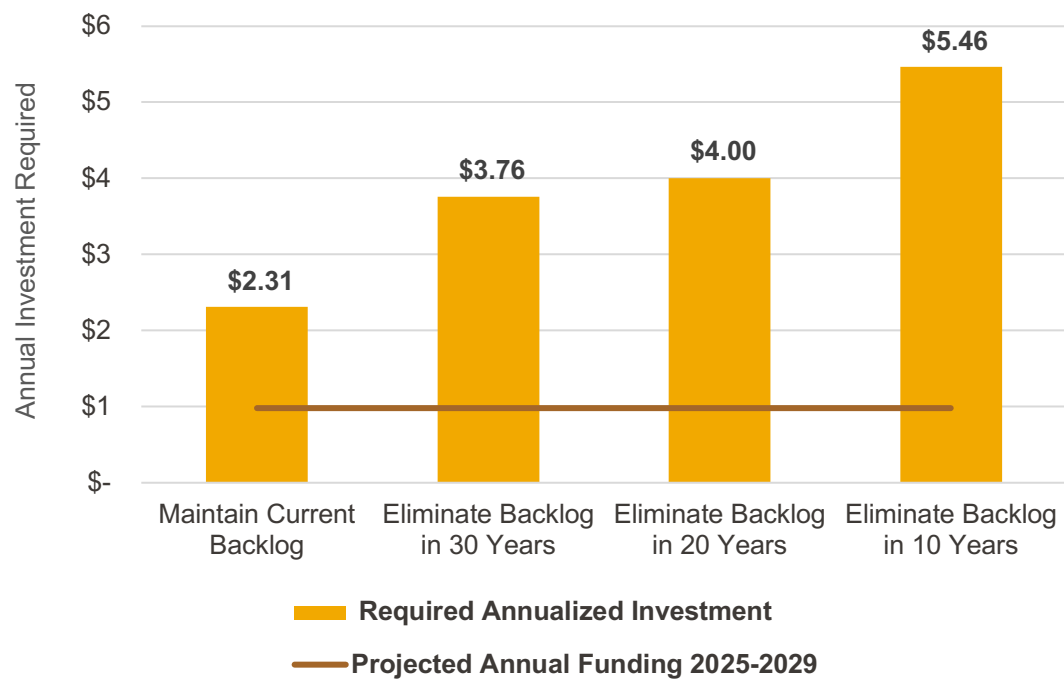
The 2025 assessment estimates the funding needed to reach SGR for all assets within 20 years is \$80 billion, or \$4 billion annually, as detailed in Table 4. Figure 3 illustrates the funding levels needed to achieve SGR over alternative timeframes and illustrates the deficiency of current funding levels—averaging \$981 million annually—to meet the region's needs.

Table 4 20-Year Investment Needs to SGR

Service Board	Category	Billions	Share of Regional Total
CTA	Facilities	\$6.79	8.48%
	Guideway	\$13.65	17.05%
	Stations	\$6.11	7.64%
	Systems	\$5.78	7.22%
	Vehicles	\$14.69	18.35%
	Total	\$47.02	58.73%

Service Board	Category	Billions	Share of Regional Total
Metra	Facilities	\$1.67	2.09%
	Guideway	\$9.61	12.00%
	Stations	\$2.18	2.73%
	Systems	\$3.62	4.52%
	Vehicles	\$10.88	13.59%
	Total	\$27.96	34.92%
Pace	Facilities	\$0.56	0.70%
	Stations	\$0.45	0.56%
	Systems	\$0.60	0.74%
	Vehicles	\$3.48	4.34%
	Total	\$5.08	6.34%
Region	Facilities	\$9.01	11.26%
	Guideway	\$23.26	29.05%
	Stations	\$8.74	10.92%
	Systems	\$10.00	12.49%
	Vehicles	\$29.05	36.28%
	Total	\$80.06	100.00%

Figure 3 Annual Funding Levels Required to Attain Investment Goals (\$ in Billions, 2023)



Looking Forward

With the completion of this regionwide asset inventory update, the RTA has put in place a process for annual assessments that will provide the data needed to track system condition, guide performance-based investment, and strengthen accountability in capital programming. These updates will be critical to making the case for continued investment and directing funds where they are needed most.

This report underscores a central truth: the Chicago region operates one of the largest and oldest transit systems in the country, and maintaining it requires ongoing, sustained reinvestment. Much of our infrastructure—rail lines, bridges, stations, and vehicles—has been in service for decades, if not longer. As a legacy system, we face challenges that newer systems do not: higher volumes of aging assets, more complex maintenance needs, and a greater risk of service disruptions if those needs are not met.

The improvements made in recent years—enabled by the 2019 Rebuild Illinois bond program—demonstrate what is possible with adequate and consistent capital funding. These investments helped modernize critical facilities, reduce the percentage of assets beyond their useful life from 31% to 25%, and reverse the region's long-standing backlog of deferred maintenance. But these gains are fragile.

The funding that made this progress possible is now fully allocated. Without a renewed and continuous capital program, the condition of the region's assets will quickly deteriorate, pushing more infrastructure past its useful life and widening the investment gap. The current \$30 billion backlog will grow, projects will be delayed, costs will rise, and service reliability and safety will suffer.

This is a pivotal moment. To protect past investments and avoid backsliding, the Chicago region needs a permanent and predictable state capital program. The scale of need—\$4 billion per year over 20 years—reflects the magnitude of maintaining and modernizing a legacy system that millions rely on every day.

Only through sustained and strategic investment can we ensure that this essential public asset remains safe, equitable, and resilient for the future.