Regional Transportation Authority

Memorandum

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To: Board of Directors
From: Leanne P. Redden, Executive Director
Date:

NITA Act (Public Act 104-0457) Summary

Action Requested

No action requested. Information only. This summary expands upon the preliminary version shared with the RTA Board in November, with new information largely beginning on page 32 with sections on *Bus Rapid Transit and IDOT Coordination* and *New Services, Stations, and Studies*. The timeline beginning on page 38 has also been expanded with additional dates and deadlines included in the legislation.

Background

The Illinois House and Senate passed landmark transit legislation early in the morning on October 31, just before the close of the fall legislative session, and or the NITA Act, includes an estimated amount of more than $1 billion in new operating funding for the regional transit system. This sustainable funding will allow the system to not just avoid cuts in 2026 and beyond but improve service for millions of riders in the coming years.

The act reorganizes the system under the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA), with new responsibilities and a board that expands to 20 members with 5 members appointed by the governor. NITA builds on the current responsibilities of the RTA with the authority for setting fares and conducting service and capital planning, allowing the Service Boards to focus on delivering high-quality service. Starting in 2027, operating funding is distributed to CTA, Metra, and Pace using a new formula that includes key metrics from the National Transit Database (NTD) and transitioning in a few years to soon-to-be-developed service standards that will help guide appropriate levels of service for different communities.

The legislation has an effective date of June 1, 2026, with some of the new revenue streams not taking effect until July 1, 2026, or later. The terms of current RTA Board members expire on September 1, 2026, while new NITA Board members must be appointed within 120 days of the effective date. The current RTA Board must vote to approve the 0.25% increase in the RTA Sales Tax via simple majority within 60 days of June 1, 2026. The legislation requires no fare increases for the first year of implementation and $46.9 million in efficiencies for the 2026 budget year. The new 25% recovery ratio requirement is waived for 2026 and further reduced to 20% in 2030.

NOTE: RTA staff will continually update the board on additional components of the legislation and its impacts through the Agency's transition to NITA.

New Operating Revenue (House Caucus Estimate: $1.209B for RTA region)

Sales Tax on Motor Fuel Dedicated to Transit Operations (p. 944)

- House Caucus Estimate: $860 million statewide split 85/15
  - $731M for RTA region
  - $129M for downstate transit
- Dedicating revenue from 5% of the 6.25% state sales tax on gasoline in Road Fund annually to transit operations
- Beginning on July 1, 2026

RTA Sales Tax Increase of 0.25% (p. 343)

- House Caucus Estimate: $478 million for RTA region
- RTA Board must vote to approve sales tax increase via simple majority within 60 days of June 1, 2026 (p. 350-353)
- Current rates:
  - 1.00 percent sales tax on general merchandise in Cook County
  - 1.25 percent sales tax on qualifying food, drugs, and medical appliances* in Cook County
  - 0.75 percent sales tax on general merchandise and qualifying food, drugs, and medical appliances* in DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties
- Proposed rates starting on the effective date of the act:
  - 1.25 percent sales tax on general merchandise in Cook County
  - 1.50 percent sales tax on qualifying food, drugs, and medical appliances* in Cook County
  - 1.00 percent sales tax on general merchandise and qualifying food, drugs, and medical appliances* in DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties
- New increment (Sales Tax III) is not matched by state; PTF match remains for Sales Tax I and II

New Capital Revenue (House Caucus Estimate: $180M for RTA region)

Interest on Road Fund and State Construction Account Balance (p. 688)

- House Caucus Estimate: $200 million statewide split 90/10
  - $180M for RTA region
  - $20M for downstate transit

Cost Estimates for Mandatory New Initiatives

- Funding flow remains the same with NITA and other regional expenses being paid first before flowing to Service Boards for operations. Regional agency budget limit is suspended for 2026 and 2027, afterwards the 5% budget growth is reinstated.
- The legislation mandates a transition process that could lead to the implementation of the following initiatives that will carry additional costs:

New Proposed Priorities	Operating Expense Estimate
Regional Police Force (p. 169)	$150,000,000 - $200,000,000
Regional Transit Ambassadors (p. 224)	$50,000,000 - $60,000,000
Regional Dial-a-Ride (p. 430)	$40,000,000 - $50,000,000
NEW EXPENSES	**$240,000,000 - $310,000,000**

Recovery Ratio (p. 307)

- Recovery ratio requirement waived in 2026; returns at 25% in 2027
    - The state-mandated recovery ratio is reduced to 25% through 2029 and further reduced to 20% in the years after. The recovery ratio for ADA paratransit is set at 5%. If the system does not meet this requirement in the 2027, 2028, or 2029 budgets, the associated financial penalties are deposited to the Road Fund. Most credits and exemptions are eliminated except for security expenses and ICE funding.
- If the 25% requirement is not met in the 2027, 2028, or 2029 budgets, then NITA must remit an amount equal to the amount of deficit (revenue shortfall from 25%) to the State.

Fares (p. 144) and Efficiencies (p. 306)

- Requires no fare increases for first year of implementation (one year after effective date) (p. 145)
- Requires $46.9 million of efficiencies in next budget year (p. 306)
- the Agency shall, through the implementation of service efficiencies, realize the following net savings in its annual budget for the fiscal year that begins on October 1, 2026: (i) $10 million in service-delivery savings; (ii) $20.1 million in savings from labor optimization, including changes in employee headcounts and position types; and (iii) $16.8 million in real estate and other property-related savings.
- Within 2 years of the effective date, requires NITA to implement several new fare programs (p. 151):
    - Fare capping

  - Income based reduced fare programs for returning residents, veterans, and individuals experiencing homelessness.
  - Free and reduced fare program for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

- NITA sets all fare policy and coordinates all fares, manage all regional fare programs, and establish the nature and standards of public transit to be provided in accordance with the Strategic Plan and service standards.
- NITA shall develop and implement a regionally coordinated and consolidated fare collection system and may delegate the responsibility for all or some aspects of physical fare collections.
- Prior to adopting any fare structure or ordinance, NITA shall allow for a reasonable time for public hearings.
- NITA shall submit the proposed fare structure to each Service Board for feedback.
- By no later than January 1, 2028, NITA, in coordination with the Service Boards, shall undertake a joint procurement for a next generation fare collection system, which shall include, among other things, a unified mobile ticket application, that shall be procured and implemented by February 1, 2030.
- Whenever a fare policy is adopted that establishes or modifies interagency passes, tickets, or transfers, the policy shall also set forth the fare-sharing agreements between the Service Boards.
- NITA has sole authority over and responsibility for administering all special fare programs, including free and reduced fares for seniors and people with disabilities, and other special fare programs.
- Maintains the Ride Free and Reduced Fare programs for seniors and people with disabilities, and Illinois Department on Aging Benefit Access Program (BAP) eligibility requirements.

NITA Board Structure (p. 230)

- New board members must be appointed within 120 days of the effective date (June 1, 2026); current RTA Board member terms expire September 1, 2026 (p. 234).
- 20-member board with 1 chair elected from the group by simple majority. Until September 1, 2030, the chair of the board must be approved by the Senate.
  - **5 directors appointed by the Mayor of Chicago** with the advice and consent of City Council:
    - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on CTA Board
    - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on CTA Board

  - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on Pace Board
  - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on Metra Board
  - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years

- **5 directors appointed by the governor** with the advice and consent of the Senate:
  - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on CTA Board
  - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on Pace Board
  - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on Metra Board
  - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years
  - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years

- **5 directors appointed by the President of the Cook County Board** with the advice and consent of the Cook County Board:
  - 1 director representing north suburban Cook County with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on the Pace Board
  - 1 director representing west suburban Cook County with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on the Pace Board
  - 1 director representing southwest suburban Cook County with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on the Metra Board
  - 1 director representing south suburban Cook County with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on the Metra Board
  - 1 director representing suburban Cook County with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on the CTA Board

- **5 directors appointed by collar county chairs** with the advice and consent of the county boards:
  - 1 director appointed by DuPage with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on Pace Board
  - 1 director appointed by Kane with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on Pace Board
  - 1 director appointed by Lake with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on Metra Board
  - 1 director appointed by McHenry with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on Metra Board
  - 1 director appointed by Will with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on Pace Board

- Supermajority requirement for NITA Board (p. 120)
  - until July 1, 2026, 12 of the Agency's then Directors; or
  - beginning September 1, 2026, either at least 15 of the Agency's then Directors OR 12 of the Agency's then Directors if there are:
    - at least 2 affirmative votes from Directors appointed by the City of Chicago
    - at least 2 affirmative votes from Directors appointed by Cook County
    - at least 2 affirmative votes from Directors appointed by the Collar Counties
    - at least 2 affirmative votes from Directors appointed by the Governor
  - Required for Strategic Plan; Five-Year Capital Program; and an Annual Budget and Two-Year Financial Plan
- The NITA Board will select an Executive Director, who will be confirmed by the Illinois Senate until July 1, 2030 (p. 190), and, along with the NITA Chair, will be included in the process for hiring any new Executive Director of CTA (p. 94), Metra (p.278), and Pace (p. 252). NITA will conduct an annual performance review for each Service Board Executive Director once each year (p. 428).

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Board Structure (p. 86)

- New board members must be appointed within 120 days of the effective date (June 1, 2026); current CTA Board member terms expire September 1, 2026 (p. 88)
- 7-member board with 1 chair elected from the group by simple majority. Until September 1, 2030, the chair of the board must be approved by the Senate.
  - **2 directors appointed by the governor** with the advice and consent of the Senate:
    - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years
  - **3 directors appointed by the Mayor of Chicago** with the advice and consent of City Council:
    - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years
- ***RTA staff believes this is a drafting error; if held consistent with other boards, the 5-year appointee should also serve on NITA Board***

    - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years
- **2 directors appointed by the President of the Cook County Board** with the advice and consent of the Cook County Board:
    - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years

Metra Board Structure (p. 274)

- New board members must be appointed within 120 days of the effective date (June 1, 2026); current Metra Board member terms expire September 1, 2026 (p. 276)
- 11-member board with 1 chair elected from the group by simple majority. Until September 1, 2030, the chair of the board must be approved by the Senate.
    - **1 director appointed by the governor** with the advice and consent of the Senate:
        - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - **2 directors appointed by the Mayor of Chicago** with the advice and consent of City Council:
        - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on NITA Board
        - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years
    - **3 directors appointed by the President of the Cook County Board** with the advice and consent of the Cook County Board:
        - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on NITA Board
        - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on NITA Board
        - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years
    - **5 directors appointed by collar county chairs** with the advice and consent of the county boards:
        - 1 director appointed by DuPage with an initial term of 5 years
        - 1 director appointed by Kane with an initial term of 3 years
        - 1 director appointed by Lake with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on NITA Board
        - 1 director appointed by McHenry with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on NITA Board

- 1 director appointed by Will with an initial term of 3 years

Pace Suburban Bus Board Structure (p. 245)

- New board members must be appointed within 120 days of the effective date (June 1, 2026); current Pace Board member terms expire September 1, 2026 (p. 249)
- 11-member board with 1 chair elected from the group by simple majority. Until September 1, 2030, the chair of the board must be approved by the Senate.
  - **1 director appointed by the governor** with the advice and consent of the Senate:
    - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on NITA Board
  - **2 directors appointed by the Mayor of Chicago** with the advice and consent of City Council:
    - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years
  - **3 directors appointed by the President of the Cook County Board** with the advice and consent of the Cook County Board:
    - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - 1 director with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - 1 director with an initial term of 5 years
  - **5 directors appointed by collar county chairs** with the advice and consent of the county boards:
    - 1 director appointed by DuPage with an initial term of 3 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - 1 director appointed by Kane with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on NITA Board
    - 1 director appointed by Lake with an initial term of 5 years
    - 1 director appointed by McHenry with an initial term of 3 years
    - 1 director appointed by Will with an initial term of 5 years who shall serve on NITA Board

Transition (p. 450)

- IDOT contracts with third-party to assist with transition plan as soon as possible after effective date; must be before September 1, 2026

- Plan includes transition of certain functions between the Service Boards and NITA
- Transition working group established by October 1, 2026, comprised of 15 members including representatives from the Agency, Service Boards, and labor
- Components
  - New process and coordination between Service Boards and Agency to create 5-year capital program by Jan 1, 2027
  - Creation of process for universal fare instrument and necessary coordination between the Agency and Service Boards by July 1, 2027
  - Transition from the NITA Law Enforcement Task Force to a sworn law enforcement officer crime prevention program on public transportation and a crime prevention plan to protect public transportation employees and riders in the metropolitan region
  - Evaluation of procurement, with special consideration given to the consolidation of bulk fuel purchases, information technology services, consulting contracts, and subscriptions of:

    (1) service planning;

    (2) grant administration;

    (3) marketing;

    (4) lobbying;

    (5) communications, media, and graphics design;

    (6) governmental and legislative affairs; and

    (7) information technology
  - Evaluation of paratransit programs and recommendations for improved coordination and service. Brought to board by January 1, 2027, for review and approval; Agency shall act no later than April 1, 2027, and report back to board with progress by January 1, 2028
  - Final report of the transition activities already performed, future recommendations, and relevant data for the General Assembly by July 1, 2027

Operating Funding Distribution (p. 357)

The legislation does not include language on allocation of funding for 2026. ADA paratransit service continues to be funded first, along with NITA agency expenses and debt service obligations, before a new formula is used to distribute funding for fixed route service to the Service Boards. The new formula is fixed for the first 3 years before a discretionary distribution using service standards is introduced in 2030.

For fiscal years 2027-29, NITA, after making deductions to cover its expenses and debt service obligations, and the cost of ADA paratransit service, allocates operating revenue from all public funding sources as follows:

- “An amount to each Service Board equal to the amount of the total public funding and the federal relief funding the Service Board received in fiscal year 2025 under the Regional Budget adopted by the Regional Transportation Authority in December 2024.”
- Any amount remaining after the distribution shall be allocated to the Service Boards in proportion to the sum of each Service Board's percentage of:
    - Vehicle revenue miles;
    - Passenger miles traveled;
    - Unlinked passenger trips; and
    - Vehicle revenue hours.
- The NITA Board can adjust the amounts allocated to each of the Service Boards by ordinance if it finds that the allocation of funds has a disproportionately adverse impact on the service levels of any Service Board and shall make appropriate adjustments to address the disproportionate adverse impact.

There is a transition period for fiscal years 2030-32, where the NITA Board first allocates funds to expenses, debt service obligations, and the cost of ADA paratransit service, and then allocates operating revenue from all sources in an amount to each Service Board equal to the amount of the total public funding and federal relief funding the Service Board received in fiscal year 2025 under the Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan adopted by the Agency in December 2024. Any amount remaining will be allocated based on the service standards.

- For fiscal year 2033 and beyond, NITA, after making deductions to cover NITA's expenses, shall allocate operating revenue from all sources to the Service Boards under the service standards.
- The allocation for any fiscal year shall be sufficient to satisfy the debt service obligations of the Service Boards.
- While ADA Paratransit will continue to be funded first, the legislation does not include guidance on RAP/TAP.

General Responsibilities (p. 122)

Northern Illinois Transit Authority

- Create and adopt plans that implement the public policy of the State to provide adequate, efficient, geographically equitable and coordinated public transportation throughout the metropolitan region;
- set goals, objectives, and standards for the Agency, the Service Boards, and Transportation Agencies;

- develop and use service standards and performance standards to objectively and transparently determine the level, nature, and kinds of public transportation that should be provided throughout the metropolitan region;
- budget and allocate operating and capital funds made available to support public transportation in the metropolitan region;
- provide financial oversight of the Service Boards;
- coordinate the provision of public transportation and the investment in public transportation; facilities to enhance the integration of public transportation throughout the metropolitan region
- set fares and plan, procure, and operate an integrated fare collection system;
- conduct operations, service, and capital planning;
- provide design and construction oversight of capital projects;
- be responsible for ensuring that public transportation service in the metropolitan region complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and
- subject to applicable land use laws, develop or participate in residential and commercial development on and in the vicinity of public transportation stations and routes as deemed necessary to facilitate transit-supportive land uses, increase public transportation ridership, generate revenue, and improve access to jobs and other opportunities in the metropolitan region by public transportation.

Service Boards

- provide for the metropolitan region public transportation service of the level, nature, and kind determined by the Agency to meet the plans, goals, objectives, and standards adopted by the Agency.

Bonding Authority (p. 371)

- No debt limit for Authority; $800M debt limit for regional agency is eliminated (p. 373)
- Working-cash notes remain with no debt limit, previously $100M.
- Service Boards may not issue new debt, except for
    - Debt designed refinance or retire debt that was previously issued and outstanding
    - Debt related to Red Line Extension and Red Purple Modernization full funding grant agreements (p. 57)
    - Working-cash notes in anticipation of funding allocated from NITA, which require regional board approval

Zero Emission Mandate (p. 163)

The Agency may not enter a new contract to purchase a bus that is not a zero-emission bus for the purpose of a Service Board's transit bus fleet after the effective date of this Act, June 1, 2026.

For the purposes of determining compliance, the Agency should not be deemed to be in violation when failure to comply is due to:

- the unavailability of zero-emission buses from a manufacturer or funding to purchase zero-emission buses;
- the lack of necessary charging, fueling, or storage facilities or funding to procure charging, fueling, or storage facilities; or
- the inability of a third party to enter into a contractual or commercial relationship with the Agency.

Service Planning and Standards

Service Planning (p. 138)

- Beginning December 2027, the NITA Board develops a 1-3 year regionally coordinated service plan that describes all transit service to be provided in the coming year or years. Key deadlines for developing service plans resemble the timeline for the current regional transit operating budget process.
- To assist in the development of service plans, the NITA Board may issue a request for proposed service plans to all Service Boards. Requests for proposed service plans must indicate the first and last years for which service will be planned and must not cover more than 3 years. Requests for proposed service plans may not be issued to less than all Service Boards.
- The service planning process begins by NITA issuing a request for proposed service plans to all the Service Boards by the preceding December 15. The requests for proposed service plans may include:
    - A description of service improvements and changes that the NITA Board desires to carry out its Strategic Plan and to implement its service standards;
    - A description of the estimates of available revenue for the next year from the Director of the Governor's Office of Management and Budget;
    - A directive to the Service Boards to prepare service coverage and service-level scenarios assuming various specified budget allocations for each Service Board;
    - The opportunity for the Service Boards to propose service improvements along with estimated costs; and any information needed to assess how to equitably allocate funding.
- By March 31 following the request for proposed service plans, each Service Board presents preliminary service proposals in a minimum of 3 public hearings, one of which must be held in Cook County, one of which

must be held in the City of Chicago, and one public hearing shall be held in each of the other counties in the region.

- By June 30 following the request for proposed service plans, each Service Board submits a proposed service plan, which, and proposed service plans must include:
    - The operating funding assumptions used by the Service Board to determine that the proposed service is feasible, including any estimates of resources that were requested;
    - The location, frequency, days and hours of service, and other details of the service;
    - The service requirements applicable to the service provided by the Service Board covering issues such as reliability, cleanliness, and safety; and
    - Requirements relating to the Service Board's compliance with fare technology and fare integration efforts, information technology systems, customer communication systems and protocols, branding and advertising efforts, coordination of schedules, and other requirements designed to improve the integration and quality of public transportation in the metropolitan region.
- Following more public comment on the final plan across the region, including one open public meeting and individual county meetings, and the service plan needs to be adopted no later than June 30. If a service plan doesn't comply with the service standards, NITA rejects and requests a revision so that the service plan conforms.
- The board shall review the proposed service plans and compile the plans into a revised, regionwide Service Plan. The board shall only approve the revised, regionwide Service Plan if it meets the service standards set forth in the Strategic Plan as best as possible considering projected available funds. If the board fails to approve the revised, regionwide Service Plan, then the board shall notify each Service Board of any deficiencies identified in that Service Board's contributions to the revised, regionwide Service Plan.
- If the board has not found that the revised, regionwide Service Plan meets the service standards, the board shall adopt a regionwide Service Plan that does. In all cases, the board shall adopt a regionwide Service Plan by no later than August 31 following the request for plans.

Service Standards & Performance Reporting (p. 435)

- Service standards and transit propensity thresholds will be adopted by the NITA Board and implemented by December 31, 2027.
    - These standards shall be developed cooperatively between NITA and Service Boards, including input from operators employed by the Service Boards.

- Special considerations can be given to limitations experienced by Metra due to shared infrastructure with freight rail.
- After service standards are implemented, NITA meets with the Service Boards quarterly to ensure operations are continuing effectively and to address any issues related to the standards.
- The board reviews and adjust service standards in conjunction with the adoption of the strategic plan.
- Until December 31, 2030, the amount of funding distributed to each Service Board is to be, at a minimum, equal to the amount of funding distributed in 2025 under Sec. 4.03.3 of the RTA Act. If the revenue generated within these years is below that of 2025 levels, the amount of funding distributed to each Service Board is reduced proportionately.
- Following the implementation of service standards, NITA and Service Boards attend a minimum of one hearing annually before an appropriations committee and a substantive committee in each chamber of the General Assembly, upon request of the General Assembly.

- NITA compiles and publishes reports comparing actual system performance measured against the service standards. Performance measures shall include data measured by line, route, or subregion, including:
  - Travel times and on-time performance
  - Ridership data
  - Equipment failure rates
  - Employee and customer safety
  - Crowding
  - Cleanliness of vehicles and stations
  - Service productivity
  - Customer satisfaction
- The Service Boards submit reports regarding the performance measures and publish them on their website on no less than a monthly basis.
  - Service standards and performance measures shall not be used as a basis for disciplinary action against any employee of NITA or Service Boards, except to the extent that the collective bargaining agreements and employment practices of NITA or Service Board provide.
- Service standards are based on a look to peer systems around the globe to inform qualitative and quantitative attributes of quality public transit. The service standards include a framework for each type of service, including:
  - Mode

  - Frequency
  - Time span
  - Vehicle type
  - Stop spacing
  - Vehicle and stop amenities
  - Network connectivity
  - Route directness
  - Route deviation
  - Coverage of service
- Service standards cover the entire metropolitan region and include transit propensity thresholds for each type of service, including:
  - Population density
  - Employment density
  - Low-income populations
  - Disabled populations
  - Zero-car households
  - Intersection density
  - Presence of sidewalks
    - NITA develops weights for each metric and a scoring system to determine transit propensity.
- Service standards are adjusted as appropriate to accommodate the addition of modes of transit not currently provided by the Agency, including:
  - Streetcars
  - Light rail
  - Full-scale bus rapid transit
  - A transition from commuter rail to regional rail or a combination of the two
  - Electrified versions of current combustion engine vehicles
- A unit of local government may petition NITA to increase the level of transit service provided above what is determined in service standards and may develop plans and policies to assist these units of government in identifying where additional service could be provided.

Regional Dial-a-Ride Program (p. 430)

- A hired third party works in collaboration with NITA, the Service Boards, counties, and townships that operate dial-a-ride (DAR) programs to

evaluate and create recommendations for enhanced coordination between DAR and fixed-route service. NITA works with service providers to implement these recommendations following an affirmative vote of the board.

- After the recommendations have been completed, the NITA may establish a DAR service program and authorize the deposit of funding into a DAR Service Program Fund. Amounts on deposits in the fund and interest and other earnings on those amounts may be used by the NITA, with the approval of its directors, for:
    - Operating cost assistance up to a maximum of 80% of the operating cost of the DAR service provided by a unit of local government
    - Capital cost assistance for vehicles and technology obtained by units of local government to deliver DAR service;
    - Payment of NITA staff deployed to help support DAR services operated by units of local government and for other operating expenses incurred by the Agency relating to the provision of DAR service by units of local government or an operating unit of NITA; and
    - Payment of capital costs incurred by NITA relating to its support of DAR service provided by units of local government or by a Service Board
- If the board creates a DAR service program policy that provides guidance on what DAR services provided by units of local government are eligible for NITA support under the DAR service program. The policy includes:
    - The level of operating and capital subsidies available to units of local government from NITA under the DAR service program;
    - Eligibility criteria for units of local government to receive operating or capital subsidies from the DAR service program;
    - A description of technical support NITA may supply units of local government that operate DAR services;
    - A description of how units of local government may obtain DAR services from a Service Board of NITA;
    - Requirements that DAR services must be consistent with service standards established by NITA to be eligible for operating or capital subsidies from NITA;
    - The requirements for integration of a DAR service operated by a unit of local government into NITA’S fare collection, service branding, travel information, and other systems required to provide riders with seamless integration of DAR services with NITA’S fixed-route transit services in the metropolitan region;
    - Standardized hours of operation, rider eligibility criteria, fares, service standards, and use of fare media compatible with NITA’S

fixed-route services, and other service-related requirements established by NITA that shall be in effect for all DAR services funded by NITA;

- NITA funding support levels tied to objective criteria such as DAR service ridership, cost per DAR service ride, number of zero car households in the service area, and percentage of trips by DAR service users that also include travel on NITA's fixed-route services;
- Requirements of any limitations on the provision of DAR service across DAR service areas and to destinations outside the metropolitan region; and
- Standardized forms of agreements between NITA and units of local government used in the administration of the DAR service program setting forth the funding arrangements, service levels, performance measures, and other requirements for participation in the program.

- NITA does not provide operating or capital funding for a DAR service that does not meet the requirements of the DAR Service Program policy.
- To better inform and implement the DAR service program NITA establishes a DAR service coordination council consisting of officials from each of the county departments of transportation in the metropolitan region as well as a diverse set of representatives from other local units of government, social service providers, and other community stakeholders. The coordination council shall advise the Agency on policies to guide the DAR service program and assist NITA in improving DAR service quality, coordination, and consistency throughout the metropolitan region.
- NITA may establish a DAR Service Board to effectuate the goals and requirements of this Section.
- If NITA creates a DAR program, then NITA addresses DAR service issues and its DAR service program in its strategic plan and in its other plans and programs.

New & Revised Advisory Councils

ADA Advisory Council (p. 454)

- Composition – no less than 5 and no more than 15 members appointed by NITA Board, members meet monthly, and meetings are subject to the Open Meetings Act (OMA).
  - Members should be reflective of the diversity of the metropolitan region, the users of the various modes of public transportation, and the interests of the residents of the region in a strong public transportation system
  - Subject to same "public transportation usage" requirements as NITA Directors – *no reference to this requirement in NITA Board section*

    - Members serve 5-year terms, may be reappointed, and can serve after their term has expired until a replacement is appointed
    - Chair elected by ADA council members
- Members cannot receive compensation, but can be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary costs incurred in the performance of their duties
- NITA must delegate 1 or more staff liaisons to assist with technical support and communication between the council and other NITA staff
- Purview of council includes:
    - Review and comment on proposed Agency budgets, financial plans, capital programs, fare policies, and service standards
    - Convey concerns on public transit service, especially as relates to impacts on disabled riders
    - Assess efficacy of NITA initiatives to protect safety of disabled riders
    - Prepare recommendations to NITA on how to improve public transit for disabled riders
    - Connect disabled riders and advocacy orgs to NITA to convey concerns
    - Advocate for funding, policies, and laws that improve public transit
    - Serve as a resource for NITA staff to discuss changes to transit service that affect disabled riders before they are implemented

Office of Disability of Policy and Planning (p. 456)

- NITA must establish an Office of Disability of Policy and Planning. In collaboration with the ADA council, initial responsibilities include:
    - Developing ADA-related training standards
    - Complaint and comment procedures
    - Paratransit eligibility criteria
    - Regional transit accessibility plan

Riders Advisory Council (p. 457)

- Composition - no less than 5 and no more than 15 members appointed by NITA Board
- Same member requirements, terms, and meeting cadence as ADA Advisory Council
- Same purview/responsibilities as ADA Advisory Council, minus focus on paratransit/disabled rider issues

Budget & Capital Program

Annual Budget and Financial Plan (p. 293)

- Beginning January 1, 2027, the Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan shall be prepared as follows:
    - By July 1 of each year the Director of the Illinois Governor's Office of Management and Budget shall submit to the Agency an estimate of revenues for the next fiscal year of the Agency to be collected from the taxes imposed by the Agency and the amounts to be available in the Public Transportation Fund and the Northern Illinois Transit Authority Occupation and Use Tax Replacement Fund and the amounts otherwise to be appropriated by the State to the Authority for its purposes. Before the board may adopt its annual appropriation and Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan ordinance, based on the information provided by the Director of the Illinois Governor's Office of Management and Budget and the estimates of amounts to be available from the State and other sources to the Service Boards, the board shall advise each Service Board on the amounts estimated to be available for the Service Board during the upcoming fiscal year and the 2 following fiscal years and the times at which the amounts shall be available.
    - Before the board may adopt its annual appropriation and Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan ordinance, the board shall provide the Service Boards with a proposed Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan. At the same time that it provides a copy of the proposed Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan to the Service Boards, the board shall make the proposed Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan budget available to the public on its website. The Agency shall hold at least 3 public hearings on the proposed Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan in Cook County and at least one public hearing in each of the other counties in the metropolitan region. In addition, the Agency shall meet with the county board, or its designee, of each of the counties in the metropolitan region.
    - Before the board adopts the Agency's annual appropriation and Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan ordinance, the Service Boards shall review the proposed Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan and shall adopt, by the affirmative vote of a majority of each Service Board's then Directors, a budget recommendation ordinance describing any modifications to the board's proposed Annual Budget and 2-Year Financial Plan that are deemed necessary by the Service Boards to provide the service described in the regionwide Service Plan adopted by the Agency.
    - Agency budget limit lifted for 2026 and 2027, 5% budget growth cap reinstated in 2028.
- The CTA (p. 125), Suburban Bus Board (p. 264), and Commuter Rail Board (p. 287) shall not (i) use any funds in its budget, or in reserves, allocated for operational expenses to fund capital projects or (ii) transfer moneys from any funds in its budget, or in reserves, allocated for operational expenses to an account primarily used to fund capital projects.

Five-Year Capital Program (p. 133 for NITA, p. 103 for CTA, p. 285 for Metra, p. 262 for Pace)

- NITA must annually adopt a five-year capital program after holding at least three public hearings in Cook County, at least one of which must take place in the City of Chicago, and one public hearing in each of the collar counties.
- Prior to submitting capital projects, each Service Board is required to hold at least one meeting with organized labor that have collective bargaining agreements with the respective Service Board.
- The Capital Program shall be based on criteria contained in the Strategic Plan, capital project prioritization process, service standards, transit asset management plans, and other criteria determined by NITA so long as they are consistent with any subregional or corridor plan.
- Before adopting a 5-year Capital Program, NITA shall consult with CMAP regarding consistency with the Regional Comprehensive Plan.
- For each project, NITA shall identify the entity responsible for implementation. NITA shall retain responsibility for Regionally Significant Projects and other comprehensive improvements. Any improvements to be used by more than one Service Board shall be under NITA's responsibility.

Capital Project Prioritization (p. 204)

- NITA required to use the same prioritization factors and considerations as RTA currently utilizes when developing its 5-year Capital Program, with the addition of:
    - Environmental protection
    - Service standards
- NITA shall make a report to the General Assembly each year describing the prioritization process and its use in funding awards.
- A summary of the project evaluation process, measures, program, and scores or prioritization criteria for all candidate projects shall be published on NITA's website.
- No project shall be included in the Capital Program, or amendments to the program, without being evaluated by this process

Bidding Restrictions (p. 384)

- Notwithstanding any law requiring a government entity to award contracts to the lowest responsible bidder, beginning January 1, 2027, NITA shall:
    - Award all covered transportation contracts using a competitive best-value procurement process; and

- Require bidders to submit an Illinois Jobs Plan for the bidder and any entity participating as part of the bidder's solicitation responses.

- NITA shall develop procedures, evaluation and scoring criteria, and all forms and guidance necessary for covered transportation agencies to implement this Section. Solicitation documents shall disclose the minimum qualification requirements and specify the criteria that shall be assigned a weighted value. The evaluation process shall use a scoring method based on the factors provided in this Section, including the Illinois Jobs Plan, and the contract price. The Illinois Jobs Plan shall be scored as part of the overall proposal and incorporated as material terms of the final contract.
- Contractors and participating subcontractors working on covered transportation contracts shall be required to submit annual Illinois Jobs Plan reports to NITA and covered transportation agencies demonstrating compliance with the contractor's or participating subcontractor's Illinois Jobs Plan commitments. The Agency shall make the Illinois Jobs Plan and annual compliance reports available to the public. The Illinois Jobs Plan and annual compliance reports shall not be considered a trade secret under subsection (g) of Section 7 of the Freedom of information Act or confidential, privileged, or otherwise exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of information Act.
- This Section shall not apply to a contract awarded based on a solicitation issued before January 1, 2027.
- The provisions of this Section shall be severable, and if the application of any clause, sentence, paragraph, or part of this Section to any person or circumstance shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, then the judgment shall not necessarily affect, impair, or invalidate the application of any clause, sentence, paragraph, or part of this Section or remainder thereof, as the case may be, to any other person or circumstance, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, or part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which the judgment shall have been rendered.

Fast-Track Authority (p. 210)

- Projects can be designated as “fast-track” as part of annual capital program development (must have over $250 million programmed, among other criteria).
- Sets out an expedited process for NITA to notify other jurisdictions that a project needs roadway and/or utility access/right-of-way and to be granted access.

Transit and Trail Supportive Development (p. 218)

- Transit-supportive means residential, commercial, governmental facilities and infrastructure improvements within ½ mi of transit station or 1/8 mi of bus stop

- “Trail-supportive development" means residential, commercial, and governmental facilities, and supporting infrastructure improvements that are (i) located within one-quarter mile of a public trail and (ii) designed to facilitate access to and use of public transit or public trails.
- Provides authority for NITA to acquire and sell/transfer property for the purposes of transit-supportive development
- May enter contracts with other entities in pursuit of transit-supportive developments
- Provides NITA the power to borrow money for transit-supportive developments, including for acquiring property and equipment

Transit-supportive Development Opportunity Inventory (p. 219)

- NITA will develop an inventory of all property owned by the Agency and Service Boards to identify property for transit-supportive development.
- Properties included in inventory must satisfy proximity requirements and be either unimproved or have improvements amounting to less gross sq. footage than the total land sq. footage, excluding parking (basically if there’s a parking lot it’s eligible).
- Inventory must be made available to the public within 1 year of the act and searchable by several filters.
- Can include properties owned by other government agencies or NGOs who have indicated they should be included and satisfy the requirements.
- Inventory responsibility may also be delegated to the MPO.

Minimum Parking Requirements (p. 9) (People Over Parking Act)

- Prohibits local governments (including home rule) from imposing or enforcing minimum parking requirements on developments within ½ mi of a public transit hub (rail station or intersection with 2 or more bus routes with 15-minute peak period service or better) or 1/8 mile of a public transportation corridor (street served by 15-minute peak period or better bus service).
- If parking is provided voluntarily by the developer, local governments can require certain provisions such as spaces reserved for car share, public parking set-aside, parking fees.
- Does not apply retroactively to already approved site plans, local authority over street parking, establishing maximum parking requirements, or minimum requirements for bicycle parking.

Pedestrian Access to Transit (p. 154)

- Component of Strategic Plan prioritizing sidewalk and other pedestrian access improvements.

- Requires units of local government doing roadway construction within ¼ mile of transit stops to include sidewalks or shared-use paths to connect transit stops to existing sidewalks within 500 ft. of the project, including concrete sidewalk boarding areas for any existing or new transit stops within the project limits. Also requires the installation of shelters where appropriate.
    - Units of local government may seek reimbursement from NITA for these improvements, including signal improvements, ADA accommodations, and other costs associated with sidewalks and shelters.
    - NITA shall provide rules for this program, including restrictions on reimbursement, an annual not-to-exceed amount for the program, and cost-sharing requirements. NITA may only use capital funds for this program.

Safety and Security

Traffic law enforcement (p. 164)

Requires NITA to cooperate with local governments and law enforcement on the enforcement of laws designed to protect the quality and safety of transit operations.

Allows NITA to establish an enforcement program that covers all jurisdictions in the region that lack laws protecting the quality and safety of public transportation operations. The program shall contain the following elements:

- Clear definitions of civil violations;
- Publication on NITA's website of descriptions and locations of transit facilities that are subject to enforcement and clearly posted signs on or near those facilities;
- A description of the types of evidence that are sufficient to prove a violation;
- Provisions for adequate notice to violators, specified in the amendment;
- An administrative adjudication process that gives registered vehicles owners an opportunity to appear before a neutral party established by NITA to contest a violation;
- A process through which the hearing officer may consider the following in defense of the violation:
    - The motor vehicle or registration plates were stolen before the violation;
    - The motor vehicle was hijacked before the violation;
    - The Driver of the vehicle entered the designated bus lane in order to yield to an emergency vehicle;
    - The motor vehicle was in the possession of a lessee under a written lease agreement; and

- Any other evidence or issues provided by NITA's rulemaking.

- Use of tools, such as remote hearings and online submission of documents, to provide alleged violators an adequate opportunity to contest;
- Civil violation fees that are no higher than the highest fees imposed for similar violations; and
- Appropriate and legally required data privacy and personal identifying protections.

Allows NITA to enter a revenue sharing agreement with each local government in jurisdiction of this enforcement program, as long as the share of revenue retained by NITA is sufficient to cover administrative costs of the enforcement program.

NITA Law Enforcement Task Force (p. 169)

Established by the Cook County Sheriff's Office via intergovernmental agreement in coordination with the Chicago Police Department, Metra Police Department, Illinois State Police, and county sheriff's offices within the region. Other law enforcement agencies within the region may participate upon request of the Cook County Sheriff.

- Participating law enforcement agencies may claim funds to cover costs incurred by participation from any available moneys provided in support of the task force.
- The Chicago Police Department shall use any resources provided for participation in the task force to supplement, not supplant, existing force strength currently assigned to its Mass Transit Unit.

Emphasizes the mission to "[preserve] life and [reduce] the occurrence and the fear of crime" on the system. The task force shall also assist and coordinate with the Chief Transit Safety Officer in their efforts to enforce NITA's and Service Boards' codes of conduct. The task force shall recognize and use best practices of community-oriented policing and procedural justice and may develop partnerships with faith-based and community organizations to achieve these goals.

Within 6 months of the effective date, the task force must submit a report of recommendations to the Coordinated Safety Response Council (created under Section 2.11.20). The report shall include:

- Determination of which code of conduct violations fall under the purview of sworn law enforcement or transit ambassadors, in coordination with the Chief Transit Safety Officer;
- Recommendations for ongoing law enforcement strategies, tactics, and best practices for the system; and
- Recommendations to be used by NITA in implementing a sworn law enforcement officer crime program and a crime prevention plan to protect employees and riders.

Disbands the task force after three years of the effective date or upon NITA's transition to a sworn law enforcement officer program and a crime prevention plan, whichever occurs first.

- Prior to disbanding, the task force shall cooperate with the Office of Transit Safety and Experience to develop a plan to transition from the task force to a sworn law enforcement officer crime prevention program and a crime prevention plan.

Vote on sworn officer crime prevention program (p. 174)

Within one year of the effective date, the NITA Board must vote to implement a sworn law enforcement officer crime prevention program on public transit and a crime prevention plan to protect employees and riders.

- Within 60 days of the vote to implement this program, the Office of Transit Safety and Experience shall develop an operational plan to implement the strategy.

Office of Transit Safety and Experience (p. 175)

The Executive Director of NITA shall, subject to the board's approval, designate a full-time Chief Transit Safety Officer to lead and manage the Office of Transit Safety and Experience.

- The Chief Transit Safety Officer must have previously served in a supervisory capacity at a law enforcement agency and receive the same training as members of the Coordinated Safety Response Council. The Chief Transit Safety Officer shall report directly to the Executive Director.
- The Executive Director may organize the Office of Transit Safety and Experience into bureaus, sections, or divisions.

Responsibilities of the Office of Transit Safety and Experience include the following:

- Development and implementation of a regional safety strategy in partnership with the Coordinated Safety Response Council;
- Promoting code of conduct compliance;
- Developing safety standards under Section 2.11.20 (see "Safety standards and investments");
- Making recommendations on system safety for inclusion in the strategic plan, annual budget, five-year capital program, and other programs;
- Making all required reports regarding rider and worker safety;
- Conducting customer satisfaction polling under Section 2.11;
- Coordination with law enforcement agencies, the NITA Law Enforcement Unit, social service agencies, and other relevant government and nongovernment entities;

- Developing and overseeing policies and programs to assist riders in their use of the transit system and to connect them with other beneficial government and social services, including through partnerships or contracts with social service and nongovernmental agencies that conduct outreach and assistance to unhoused riders;
- Data collection and analysis; and
- Implementing policies and procedures for riders to provide feedback on their transit experience.

To implement this Section, NITA may enter contracts with nongovernmental entities that provide outreach and assistance to unhoused riders, riders that suffer from mental health issues, or that otherwise may benefit from social services.

- Participating law enforcement agencies may claim funds to cover costs incurred by participation in intergovernmental agreements from any available moneys provided in support of the sworn officer program or crime prevention plan.
- The Chicago Police Department shall use any resources provided for participation in these programs to supplement, not supplant, existing force strength currently assigned to its Mass Transit Unit.

Coordinated Safety Response Council (p. 179)

Established by the Office of Transit Safety and Experience to facilitate collaboration among government and nongovernment entities to address safety and social service needs for riders and employees. All members of the Council must receive or show proof of prior training on law regarding police-community encounters; police tactics, including de-escalation; impartial policing; policing individuals in crisis; procedural justice; and cultural competency. Composition of the Council shall include:

- NITA Chief Transit Safety Officer
- A representative from each Service Board
- Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
- Cook County Sheriff's Office
- The highest-ranking member of the NITA Law Enforcement Task Force
- Law enforcement agencies whose jurisdiction include transit facilities
- Chicago Police Department
- Chicago Department of Family and Support Services
- Organized labor representing CTA operators
- A representative from an organization providing behavioral health or mobile crisis response services
- A representative from an organization participating in the implementation of the Community Emergency Services and Supports Act

- Representatives from organizations serving youth, people with disabilities, or individuals experiencing homelessness
- A representative from the Illinois Department of Human Services

Within nine months of the effective date, the Coordinated Safety Response Council shall issue a report on using sworn law enforcement officers to respond to crime on public transit, which shall include:

- Feasibility, advisability, and necessity assessment of various strategies involving sworn law enforcement.
- Qualifications, composition, training, requirements, strategies, roles, and accountability measures to implement those strategies.

The Council shall be responsible for developing an incident response and long-term safety strategy, which shall include:

- Appropriate responses for sworn law enforcement and social service providers for different code of conduct violations.
- The organization responsible for deploying resources to responders.
- Agreements, contracts, or other protocols needed for responders to implement these requirements.
- Multijurisdictional collaboration, specifically dealing with jurisdictional authority, use of force standards, training, and providing clarity to allow multiple jurisdictions to lawfully enforce on the CTA.
- This report assumes a baseline annual funding level of $95 million from NITA and a baseline funding level by each local law enforcement agency participating on the Council that is no less than that agency's transit safety spending for FY2025.
- The incident response and long-term safety strategy shall be reviewed no less than every 3 years.
- NITA shall implement the recommendations of this plan as soon as possible.

Safety Subcommittee (p. 184)

Requires NITA Board to establish a standing Safety Subcommittee comprised of at least one member from each appointing authority. Responsibilities include:

- Reviewing findings and recommendations of the Office of Transit Safety and Experience;
- Examining safety-related data on issues facing NITA, Service Boards, riders, and employees; and
- Reviewing the NITA's safety-related performance standards and reporting.

Safety standards and investments (p. 185)

Requires NITA to establish and enforce safety standards for service provided by the Service Boards or other transportation agencies under a purchase of service or grant agreement.

- Safety standards also apply to the design and maintenance of facilities to increase actual or perceived safety there, including lighting of stations and bus stops.

Requires NITA to deploy technologies that enhance the safety of riders, including real-time safety reporting technologies including:

- A single feature in its mobile application that allows riders to report safety issues in real time, connecting riders with law enforcement or appropriate entities
- This feature must be operational no later than 180 days after the effective date.

Requires NITA to conduct customer satisfaction polling annually, including data on rider experience, actual and perceived safety on the system, cleanliness, maintenance, availability, accessibility, dependability, and rider information.

NITA shall cooperate with IDOT, Tollway Authority, CMAP, and other units of government to assist them in using investments in transit facilities and operations to achieve crash, fatality, and serious injury reduction goals.

Provides that the security portion of the system safety program, including investigation reports and other data compiled, collected, or prepared by or for NITA, shall be confidential and shall not be subject to discovery or admitted into evidence in federal or State court or considered for other purposes in any civil action for damages.

Bus shields (p. 188)

Requires bus shields, as defined in the amendment, to be installed on all buses in the CTA and Pace fleets by no later than January 1, 2028.

Requires NITA to coordinate with the CTA, Pace, and labor unions representing their bus drivers on implementation of this requirement by January 1, 2027.

Suspension of riding privileges and confiscation of fare media (p. 206)

Consolidates the responsibilities of this Section under NITA. This is currently the responsibility of each individual Service Board.

Transit Ambassadors (p. 224)

Requires NITA to implement a transit ambassador program by July 1, 2027, and to develop a training program with input from each Service Board and other stakeholders.

The Service Boards, in coordination with NITA, shall deploy trained, unarmed personnel on buses, bus stops, trains, and stations. Transit ambassador units may be composed of mobile and fixed-post personnel. The individual responsibilities of a transit ambassador may include:

- Navigational and other passenger assistance;
- Liaising with law enforcement, social services, and community resources to address unsafe conditions and connect people with relevant services; and
- Monitoring passenger activity in compliance with laws and rules.

Requires at least 80% of transit ambassadors serving the CTA shall be full-time employees of the CTA and requires CTA to bargain with the union representing current customer service employees to determine the initial conditions of employment.

- Current CTA customer service employees are to be given preference before additional transit ambassadors are hired. These employees must undergo training by January 1, 2027.

Customer-facing Metra employees are required to undergo the same training as transit ambassadors by January 1, 2027.

Beginning January 1, 2031, NITA shall evaluate the efficacy of the program at least every five years to identify needed changes and improvements.

Language Accessibility (p. 226)

NITA and all Service Operators shall:

- Translate all vital documents by a qualified translator into any non-English language spoken by at least 5% of the service area population or at least 10,000 individuals within the service area, whichever is less;
- Provide oral interpretation services by a qualified interpreter at customer service centers, by multilingual phone lines, or through on-demand interpreter services;
- Post multilingual signage, including “I Speak” language identification posters, in major transit hubs and vehicles; and
- Include translation features in major languages spoken by limited English proficient individuals for digital platforms, applications, and real-time service updates.

No later than January 1, 2027, and every three years thereafter, NITA and Service operators shall develop and implement a language access plan. This plan shall:

- Identify limited English proficient populations in the metropolitan area, based on census, rider surveys, and community input;
- Describe language assistance services currently provided;
- Implement a timeline for improvements and expansion of language assistance services; and
- Designate staff responsible for compliance and monitoring.

NITA and all Service Operators shall conduct regular outreach to limited English proficient communities through culturally competent community organizations and

ethnic media and include limited English proficient riders in service planning, language access evaluations, and public engagement sessions.

NITA shall make available to all customer-facing staff training on legal obligations under federal law, proper use of language services, and cultural competency best practices. The Service Board shall make best efforts to ensure that all new hires and existing customer-facing employees complete this training.

No later than July 1, 2026, and each year thereafter, each Service Operator shall submit annual language access progress reports to NITA. NITA shall conduct an annual compliance review of at least one Service Operator.

Performance & Internal Audits (p. 142)

The Auditor General shall conduct a performance audit of NITA and Service Boards every 5 years, pursuant to an intergovernmental agreement with the Auditor General to facilitate the audit. When conducting an audit of NITA, the Auditor General shall:

- Focus on the quality and cost-effectiveness of the public transportation system, including comparing against the performance of transit systems in comparable metropolitan regions around the world;
- Include recommendations for improvements based on industry best practices and any legislation or other steps that governmental bodies could take to facilitate such improvements; and
- Assess the efficacy of the public transportation system in providing affordable transportation; connecting residents to jobs, education, and other opportunities; and improving the environment.
- Auditor General required to consider limitations experienced by Metra due to shared infrastructure with freight rail.

NITA may suggest areas of emphasis for the Auditor General to consider, and the Auditor General may structure the audit and recommendations to help achieve the goal of a well-functioning and efficient regional public transportation system.

The Auditor General and NITA shall coordinate the timing of performance audits with Strategic Plan and 5-Year Capital Program development.

NITA required to reimburse the Auditor General for the costs incurred in conducting the performance audits.

Chief Internal Auditor (pp. 440)

- Within 180 days of the effective date, the NITA Board shall appoint a Chief Internal Auditor for a term of 5 years, reporting directly to the board. The Chief Internal Auditor must have the following qualifications:
    - A Bachelor’s degree from an institution of higher learning;
    - Be a certified internal auditor, certified public accountant with at least 5 years of auditing experience, or an auditor with 5 years of auditing experience; and

- Have not been convicted of any felony under state or federal law, including state law in other states.

- The Chief Internal Auditor shall have jurisdiction over each of the Service Boards and all vendors and others doing business with NITA and Service Boards. The duties of the Chief Internal Auditor include:
  - Directing internal audit functions for NITA, including operational, financial, compliance, performance, information technology, and special audits;
  - Prepare audit reports and assess program goals, including making recommendations leading to compliance, reduced operating costs, improves services, and greater general efficiency in existing operations;
  - Preparing the annual audit plan for submission to the board, subject to board approval by March 1 of each year;
  - Follow up on findings in internal and externals audit reports to determine appropriate remedial action; and
  - Coordinate external audit requests and report responses to be completed by NITA management.
- The Chief Internal Auditor or any deputy internal auditor may not:
  - Become a candidate for any elective public office;
  - Hold any other public office, except for appointments on governmental advisory boards or study commissions;
  - Hold any other employment;
  - Be actively involved in the affairs of any political party;
  - Actively participate in any political campaign for any public office;
  - Actively participate in any referendum or public question campaign concerning the Constitution or entities audited by the Chief Internal Auditor during the preceding four years;
  - Hold any legal, equitable, creditor, or debt interests in any entity which contracts with NITA during their tenure;
  - Have any direct or indirect financial or economic interest in the transactions of NITA during their tenure;
  - Conduct or supervise a post audit of any outside agency or vendor for which they were responsible or were employed or which they contracted with during the preceding four years; and
  - Make or report any charges of nonfeasance or malfeasance in the office of any public official without reasonable grounds based on accepted auditing standards.

- The Chief Internal Auditor may hire employees as necessary; contract with certified public accountants, attorneys, and other firms licensed in Illinois; and delegate powers as needed to contracted special assistant auditors.
- Establishes rules and procedures for various types of audits and requires Service Boards to respond to requests for information in a timely manner. Failure to do so must be reported to the NITA Board by the Chief Internal Auditor.

Bus Rapid Transit and IDOT Coordination

Bus rapid transit and related technologies. (p.46)

To improve public transportation service across the State, the Department, the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, and counties and municipalities shall collaborate with and provide support to the Northern Illinois Transit Authority and other public transit providers in the implementation of bus rapid transit and bus priority service using the expressway, tollway, and other roadway systems. The Department, in cooperation with the Northern Illinois Transit Authority, other public transit providers, the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, and counties and municipalities, shall evaluate and refine technologies and operations approaches to bus rapid transit and bus priority operations and make recommendations to the Northern Illinois Transit Authority and other public transit providers. The Department shall work with public transit providers to research, evaluate, and, where appropriate, implement vehicle infrastructure, intelligent transportation systems, and other technologies to improve the quality and safety of public transportation on roadway systems.

Transit Integration Policy Development Committee. (p. 47)

The Transit Integration Policy Development Committee is created within the Department to better integrate transit policy, planning, and design into Department decisions and highway planning and design. The Committee shall consist of the following members:

- the Secretary or the Secretary's designee;
- representatives of the Department that are involved in highway or intermodal project implementation, design, planning, or programming, as designated by the Secretary; and
- transportation experts from outside the Department, including, but not limited to, staff of a metropolitan planning organization or local transportation department, as designated by the Secretary.

The Committee shall recommend new policies and processes or shall review and recommend revisions to existing policies and processes for:

- identifying existing, planned, and potential future transit corridors;
- soliciting in a timely fashion and evaluating feedback from local transit agencies and local governments as it pertains to Department projects on existing, planned, and potential future transit corridors;

- coordinating with local transit authorities, intercity bus operators, and local governments on the delivery of bus priority projects;
- incorporating designing for transit vehicles and intercity buses on highway projects in the Department's Design and Environment Manual, including design to facilitate bus-on-shoulder operations; and
- developing a cost and maintenance policy for construction and maintenance of future facilities in partnership with transit agencies.

The Committee shall research global best practices on optimizing roadways for public transportation services.

The Committee shall consult with highway and transit experts, transit users, and other individuals and groups with knowledge and experience on how to optimize roadways for public transportation service.

The Department shall implement policies and processes based on recommendations developed by the Transit Integration Policy Development Committee under subsection (b) and shall publish, by January 1, 2027, a report on the modifications to the Department's policies and procedures based on input from the Transit Integration Policy Development Committee. The report shall include the Department's identification of statutory provisions that the Department believes make it difficult or impossible for the Department to implement its recommended best practices for optimizing its highways for public transit service and users.

The Transit Integration Policy Development Committee shall review and evaluate the Department's implementation of policies and processes created or revised under subsection

The Committee shall publish a report on the status of the Department's implementation of these policies and procedures by January 1, 2030.

This Section is repealed January 1, 2030.

Transit Coordination Oversight Officer (p. 49)

Within 12 months after the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 104th General Assembly and until January 1, 2030, the Secretary shall designate a Transit Coordination Oversight Officer within the Department. The Transit Coordination Oversight Officer shall be tasked with the following:

- overseeing the Department's implementation of the policies and processes recommended by the Transit Integration Policy Development Committee;
- leading coordination across the Department to publish the Department's reports outlined in Section 2705-594 of this Code; and
- liaising with transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and members of the public to solicit and evaluate feedback on the Department's implementation of transit-related policies and processes.

Beginning January 1, 2030, the Department may employ a Transit Coordination Oversight Officer.

New Services, Stations, and Studies

CTA Blue Line (p. 230)

The Agency shall remodel, renovate, or construct a new station at or near the Central station and the western entrance at Leclaire Avenue location on the Blue Line. The renovated or newly constructed station shall be completed and open for public operation no later than January 1, 2029.

CTA Green Line (p. 230)

The Agency shall remodel, renovate, or construct a new station along the Green Line within the Englewood community area. The renovated or newly constructed station shall be completed and open for public operation no later than January 1, 2029.

The Agency may enter into intergovernmental agreements with municipalities to share costs for repair and related right-of-way improvements for bridges used by the Green Line located outside of the City of Chicago.

Metra Rock Island (p. 290)

Regional rail scheduling pilot program on the Rock Island commuter rail line. By January 1, 2027, the Commuter Rail Division shall implement a regional rail scheduling pilot program on the Rock Island commuter rail line to improve transit access for residents of Will County and southern Cook County.

Metra Electric (p. 290)

Planning study on expanding the Metra Electric commuter rail line. The Commuter Rail Division shall conduct a planning study on expanding the Metra Electric commuter rail line from University Park to Kankakee.

Metra South Shore Line (p. 289)

Agreements with the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District. The Commuter Rail Division shall not enter into any agreement that prohibits trains of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, also known as the South Shore Line, from picking up passengers at stations operated by the Division. Any agreement in effect on the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 104th General Assembly shall remain in effect until its expiration and, if there is no expiration date provided, the Commuter Rail Division shall make best efforts to renegotiate the agreement to allow the South Shore Line to pick up passengers at stations operated by the Commuter Rail Division. The Commuter Rail Division may negotiate the revenue sharing provisions with the South Shore Line as the Commuter Rail Division deems appropriate.

Metra Service Outside Chicago Area (p. 156)

Nothing in this Section prevents the board of the Commuter Rail Division of the Agency from entering into agreements to provide service, or the Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation from providing service, between points outside the metropolitan region when it is deemed beneficial to the State, the Agency, the Services Boards, or the Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation.

Potential New Passenger Rail Service from Joliet (p. 50)

Planning study on improvements needed at the Joliet train station. The Illinois Department of Transportation shall conduct a planning study on improvements needed at the Joliet train station for potential extensions of passenger rail service to Peoria and other locations outside of the counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.

Transit to Trails Grant Program (p. 50)

Subject to appropriation, the IDOT Secretary shall establish the Transit to Trails Grant Program to award grants to eligible entities for projects that facilitate travel by public transportation to public outdoor recreation sites for outdoor activities, including hiking, biking, boating, picnicking, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, or other nature-based activities. Grants awarded under the program shall be used to:

- alter or expand the operation of existing transit service to accommodate increased access by the public to outdoor recreation activities;
- construct new infrastructure or improve existing infrastructure to facilitate safe, convenient access to outdoor recreation sites, including, but not limited to, stations, stops, shelters, bike-share, and bicycle infrastructure; and
- conduct public outreach, education, and engagement efforts to inform the public and encourage the use of transit and access to outdoor recreation.

The Secretary shall award grants through the program on an annual basis. The Department shall adopt necessary rules to create and implement the program.

Eligible recipients of grants under the program shall include:

- public transit agencies;
- owners of outdoor recreation lands accessible by the general public, including parks districts, conservation districts, and forest preserve districts; and
- units of local government, State agencies, and nonprofit organizations engaged in facilitating outdoor recreation opportunities.

In considering grant applications under the program, the Department shall prioritize projects that demonstrate an intent to enhance access to outdoor recreation opportunities for populations with the greatest need of improved access to outdoor nature-based recreation. These populations shall be defined as residents of:

- R3 Areas as established under Section 10-40 of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act;
- environmental justice communities as defined under the Illinois Solar for All Program and updated from time to time by the Illinois Power Agency and the Administrator of the Illinois Solar for All Program;
- communities that can demonstrate to the Secretary that the community has inadequate, insufficient, or no park space or recreation facilities, including by demonstrating:

- quality concerns relating to the available park space or recreation facilities;
- the presence of recreational facilities that do not serve the needs of the community; or
- the inequitable distribution of park space for high-need populations, based on income, age, or other measures of vulnerability and need; and

- communities in which at least 50% of the population is not located within 0.5 miles of park space.

The Department shall provide technical assistance in preparing grant applications to applicants upon request.

Champaign Airport (p. 689)

There shall be a transfer of $5,000,000 from the Downstate Transit Improvement Fund to an airport operated under the University of Illinois Airport Act. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2027, the Department shall issue a semi-annual call for projects for this program.

Springfield Airport Authority (p. 703)

For Fiscal Year 2027, the sum of $3,750,000, or so much of that amount as may be necessary, may be appropriated from the Downstate Transit Improvement Fund to the Department of Transportation to make a grant to the Springfield Airport Authority for the purpose of supporting daily commercial air service between Springfield and Chicago O'Hare International Airport in order to facilitate State operations in the Capital City.

Intercity Rail (p. 702 and 713)

A portion of the total residual fund balance remaining in the Downstate Transit Improvement Fund after the completion of Fiscal Year 2026 and every year thereafter may be used by the Department for intercity rail capital projects for connectivity between downstate communities and Chicago, including routes to new destinations. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2026, the Department of Transportation may issue an annual notice of funding opportunity for intercity rail capital projects that may include, but are not limited to, station upgrades, grade separations, and planning studies for new destinations. The amount used from this fund for intercity rail capital projects may not exceed $342,000,000.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2026, moneys in the Downstate Mass Transportation Capital Improvement Fund may be used by the Department of Transportation for intercity rail capital projects for connectivity between downstate communities and Chicago, including routes to new destinations. The amount to be spent on intercity rail capital projects from the Downstate Mass Transportation Capital Improvement Fund shall be no more than $134,729,538.

Downstate Transit Operations (p. 699)

Beginning July 1, 2026, and every fiscal year thereafter, if the participant's expenditures in the immediately preceding fiscal year are equal to or greater than 85% of the amounts appropriated to the participant in the immediately preceding

fiscal year, then the participant's appropriation shall increase by an amount equal to the year-over-year percentage increase in revenue deposited into the Downstate Public Transportation Fund. If there was a year-over-year reduction in the revenue deposited into the Fund, then each participant's appropriation shall be no more than the previous fiscal year's appropriation.

Implementation Timeline

There is no change to the current RTA Act until the effective date of Public Act 104-0457, or the NITA Act, on June 1, 2026.

Following the effective date of June 1, 2026:

- **June 1:** State-mandated recovery ratio set at 25% for mainline service and 5% for ADA paratransit service, waived in 2026.
- **June 1:** Zero-emission bus mandate in effect.
- **Within 60 days of June 1:** RTA Board must act on whether to raise the RTA Sales Tax .25% in Cook and the Collar Counties.
- **September 1:** The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) deadline to enter a contract with a third-party consultant to assist with the transition.
- **September 1:** All current board appointments expire.
- **Within 120 days of June 1:** All new board appointments (33 total) must be seated.
- **October 1:** NITA appoints members of Transition Working Group.
- **October 1:** Implementation of efficiencies and cost-savings.
- **Within 180 days of the effective date (December 2026):** Board appoints Chief Internal Auditor.
- **Within 180 days of the effective date (December 2026): App for reporting safety incidents must be operational.**
- **Within six months of the effective date (December 2026):** NITA Law Enforcement Task Force submits report of recommendations to the Coordinated Safety Response Council.

2027

- **January 1:** New statutory NITA budget process begins using additional factors for allocation of funds above 2025 public funding baseline. 25% recovery ratio penalty and reporting requirement in effect.
- **January 1:** Transition consultant recommendations on ADA Paratransit service will be delivered to the NITA Board
- **January 1:** NITA and Service Boards shall develop and implement a language access plan, to be reviewed every three years hereafter.
- **January 1:** NITA shall coordinate with labor unions representing bus drivers on the implementation of installing bus shields on all buses in fleets.
- **January 1:** New process and coordination between the Agency and Service Boards to create 5-Year Capital Program, Agency determines implementing agency for each project, responsible for regionally significant projects as defined in the Act.

- **January 1:** Requirement for bidders to submit an Illinois Jobs Plan begins.
- **January 1:** CTA employees to become Transit Ambassadors must undergo training by this date. Customer-facing Metra employees also required to undergo the same training.
- **January 1:** IDOT must publish a report on department policy modifications made based on input from the Transit Integration Policy Development Committee.
- **January 1:** Implementation of a regional rail scheduling pilot program on the Rock Island by Metra.
- **Within nine months of the effective date (March 2027):** Coordinated Safety Response Council shall issue a report on using sworn law enforcement officers to respond to crime on public transit.
- **April 1:** The Agency shall take action on the transition consultant recommendations regarding ADA Paratransit.
- **Within one year of the effective date (Occurring before June 1, 2027):** NITA Board votes to implement a sworn law enforcement officer program. Within 60 days of this vote, the Office of Transit Safety and Experience shall develop an operational plan to implement this program.
- **Within one year of the effective date (Occurring before June 1, 2027):** IDOT will designate a Transit Coordination Oversight Officer.
- **July 1:** Transit Ambassador Program and training program to be implemented.
- **July 1:** NITA Board produces a summary of transition activities and final report for the General Assembly.
- **July 1:** NITA implements transition plan by ordinance.
- **July 1:** Establish a process for procuring a universal fare instrument.
- **December:** Service planning process begins by NITA requesting proposed service plans from Service Boards, adopt budget ordinance for 2028 using new funding allocations as detailed in the legislation.
- **December 31:** Transit-propensity thresholds must be developed, adopted, and implemented.

2028

- **January 1:** NITA and Service Boards undertake a joint procurement for a next generation fare collection system to be fully implemented by Feb. 1, 2030.
- **January 1:** Bus shields must be installed on all CTA and Pace buses.
- **January 1:** Budget growth limit reinstated for NITA, 5% year-over-year.
- **January 1:** NITA staff reports to board on implementation of transition consultant recommendations.

- **March 31:** Service Boards present preliminary service plan proposals, with at least three public hearings having taken place prior.
- **April 30:** Service Boards submit proposed service plans, subject to requirements outlined in legislation.
- **No later than two years after the effective date (before June 1, 2028):** Implementation of 1) an income-based reduced fare program for veterans, returning residents, individuals experiencing homelessness; 2) a program for survivors of gender-based violence; and 3) system-wide fare-capping.
- **June 30:** Following public comment, final regional service plan is adopted.
- **July 1:** Centralization of customer information by NITA, including digital and web-based trip-planning and vehicle arrival information
- **December 31:** Service Standards and transit propensity thresholds implemented by NITA.

2029

- **Three years after the effective date:** NITA Law Enforcement Task Force must be disbanded and transitioned to a sworn law enforcement officer program, if not already done at this point.
- **January 1:** State-mandated recovery ratio reduced to 20% for mainline service and held at 5% for ADA paratransit service. NITA is required to report this within six months of the end of each fiscal year hereafter.
- **January 1:** CTA must have completed two new stations, one on the Blue Line and one on the Green Line.
- **January 1:** Service plans go into effect.

2030

- **January 1:** Discretionary funding above baseline allocated by service standards (2030).
- **January 1:** Transit Integration Policy Committee publishes report on IDOT implementation of Committee recommendations.
- **February 1:** Unified mobile ticket app implemented.
- **July 1:** Senate no longer confirms NITA ED.
- **September 1:** Senate no longer confirms NITA, Pace, and Metra board chairs.

2031

- **January 1:** NITA evaluates the efficacy of Transit Ambassador Program and must do so at least every 5 years hereafter.

2033

- **January 1:** NITA allocates all operations funding based on Service Standards.