Passengers alight the Pulse Milwaukee Line at the Southbound Devon Station in Chicago, Illinois.

A-3 Rapid Transit Program

Initiative: Continue planning, designing, implementing and operating Pulse Lines and expressway-based services.

IMPLEMENT NOW | implement later | further investigate

Supports Goals:
Accessibility, Equity, Productivity, Responsiveness, Adaptability, Collaboration, Diversity, Environmental Stewardship, Fiscal Solvency, and Integrity

OVERVIEW

Since *Vision 2020*, Pace has established an internal Rapid Transit Program (RTP) office tasked with managing the funding, planning, administration and delivery of Pace's arterial rapid transit service called Pulse, as well as expressway-based services benefiting from bus priority infrastructure.

The RTP office has coordinated with agency staff and external partner agencies to deliver projects such as the I-90 Market Expansion, Barrington Road Station, park-n-ride lots, and most recently, the Pulse Milwaukee Line. This office also establishes the baseline processes for advancing corridors through the multiple phases of project development, and coordinates how the larger network of rapid transit services is established and tied in with the rest of the larger regional transit system.

Pace utilizes corridor studies to identify key project elements and external partnerships to enhance land-use and pedestrian environments in support of future rapid transit services. Support is also leveraged across a broad spectrum of public agencies to maximize public resources that enhance transit service for customers. In particular, the RTP office benefits from the funding and technical support from project sponsors such as CDOT, CMAP, Cook County, CTA, FTA, IDOT, RTA, and municipalities.

Pace will continue rolling out new Pulse and Express services that strengthen transit use to and from CTA and Metra stations, Pace terminals, and major activity centers in the metro area. These services will continue to use new and innovative ways to increase service frequency, speed, and reliability, while offering passengers improved boarding areas, information, and customer service. Dedicated bus lanes, articulated vehicles, battery electric technology, and queue jumps are examples of how Pace can innovate future Pulse and Express bus.

ACTION ITEM 1 Implement Near-Term Priority Pulse Network

Driving Innovation includes a proposed initiative under P-3 Strategic Administrative Functions for a Corridor Development program (Action Item 3) to facilitate an organized and focused process for planning holistic pedestrian, land-use, bus infrastructure and service improvements along the region's most utilized bus corridors. This effort is intended to replicate the Rapid Transit Office's past successes with long-range planning activities for Pulse Lines and apply it to both Pulse and regular fixed-route categories of Primary and Secondary routes.

While these priority corridors proposed by the *Driving Innovation* process are intended to provide overall guidance for developing Pace's fixed-route services, Pace will still maintain a separate sub-group of Near-term Priority Pulse corridors. These are corridors in which the agency has signaled a commitment to pursuing the additional resources needed to invest in the capital and operating requirements of Pulse service, which also feature the highest-performing Primary and Secondary routes.

Currently, Pace has implemented Pulse service along the first of seven Near-term Priority corridors with the Pulse Milwaukee Line. The remaining six corridors include:

- Dempster Street
- South Halsted Street
- 95th Street
- Cermak Road
- Harlem Avenue
- Roosevelt Road

Each corridor is at a different phase of implementation, as some are in the planning stages while others in design and project delivery (see Figure 1 for more details). Pace will continue to update this list and add new corridors to the Near-Term Priority network, as existing programed lines are implemented.

Dedicated bus lanes, articulated vehicles, battery electric technology, and queue jumps are examples of how Pace can innovate Pulse in the future.

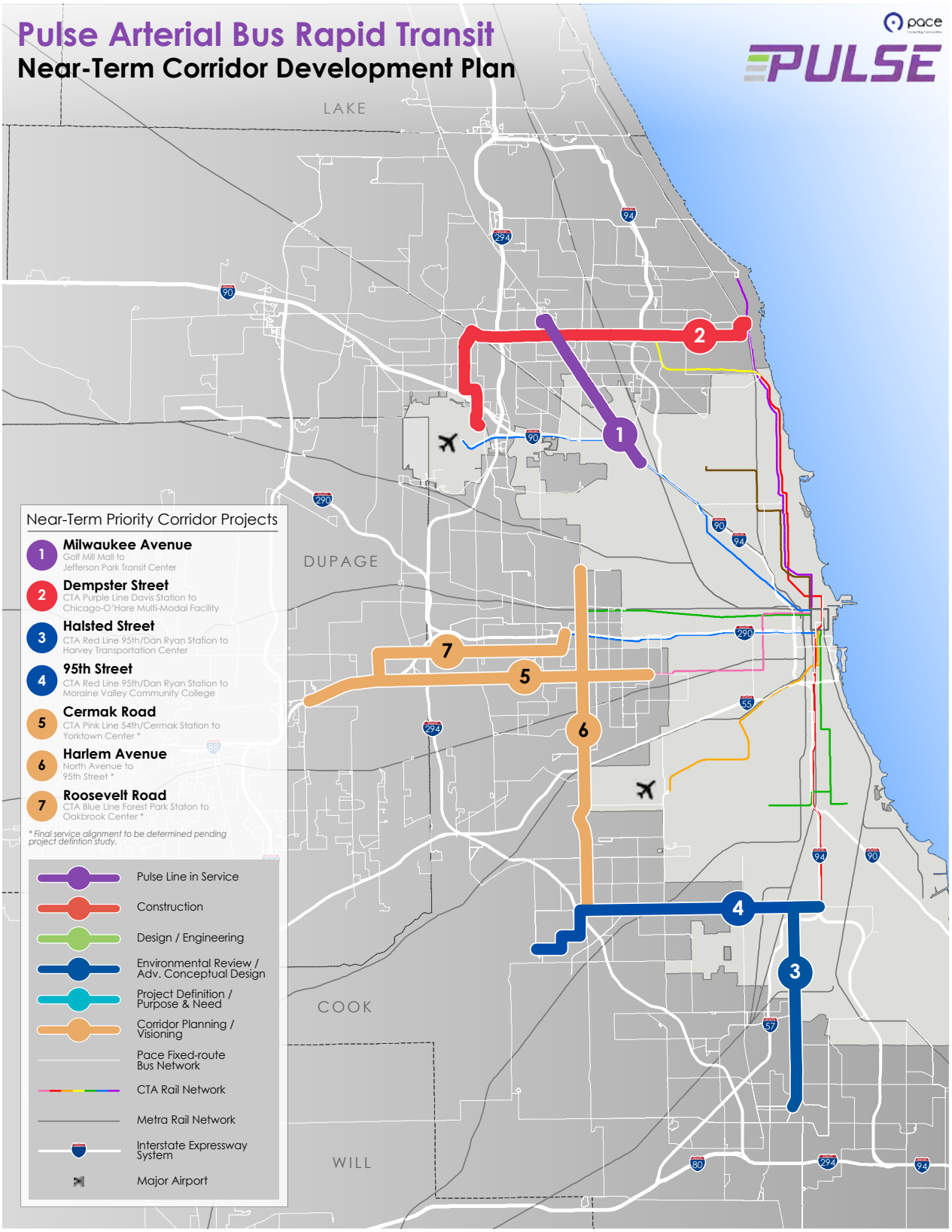
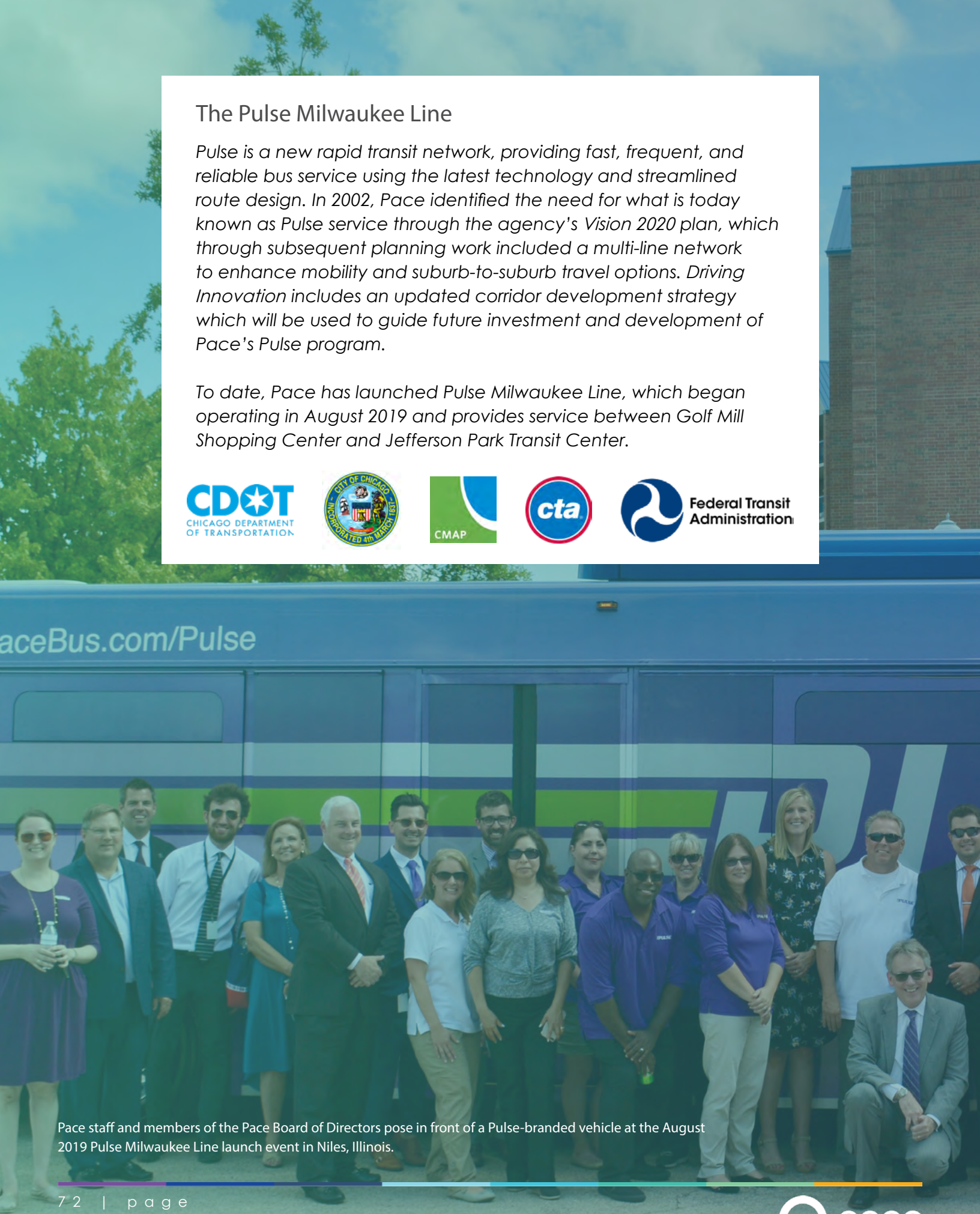


Figure 1: Pace Near-Term Priority Pulse Corridors - Project Development Status

The Pulse Milwaukee Line

Pulse is a new rapid transit network, providing fast, frequent, and reliable bus service using the latest technology and streamlined route design. In 2002, Pace identified the need for what is today known as Pulse service through the agency's Vision 2020 plan, which through subsequent planning work included a multi-line network to enhance mobility and suburb-to-suburb travel options. Driving Innovation includes an updated corridor development strategy which will be used to guide future investment and development of Pace's Pulse program.

To date, Pace has launched Pulse Milwaukee Line, which began operating in August 2019 and provides service between Golf Mill Shopping Center and Jefferson Park Transit Center.



Pace staff and members of the Pace Board of Directors pose in front of a Pulse-branded vehicle at the August 2019 Pulse Milwaukee Line launch event in Niles, Illinois.

The Pulse Milwaukee Line is one of seven priority corridors Pace is pursuing over the next ten years. Currently, three priority corridors are in project development moving forward toward implementation: the Dempster, Halsted, and 95th Street Lines.

The remaining three corridors planned for near-term development include Cermak Road, Harlem Avenue, and Roosevelt Road. These corridors are currently not funded for project development, and actual service alignments, station locations and other local transit access improvements will be developed in the future.

Pace thanks its many partners and team members who helped make the Milwaukee Line a reality.

HNTB Illinois Department of Transportation NILES RTA

ACTION ITEM 2 Expand Pace Express Services

OVERVIEW

Pace is well on the way to providing a connected network of expressway-based services. A solid and expanding growth market is present along the I-55 Stevenson and I-90 Jane Addams Memorial Tollway corridors, and capital funding has been allocated for building new passenger facilities along I-294 Tri-State Tollway. This network is expected to also be reinforced by providing transfer opportunities to future Pulse lines and other Pace services at key nodes.

Other congested expressways in the region stand to benefit from deploying express bus options supported by bus priority infrastructure such as Bus-on-Shoulder lanes and Flex Lanes. The following projects will further assess and plan for implementing new or improved express service, as resources allow.

I-55 EXPANSION

Pace's Bus on Shoulder service along I-55 Stevenson Expressway has been one of the agency's biggest success stories to date, with a 600 percent ridership increase since the service was launched in 2011 (as recorded just prior to COVID-19). The initiative has been so successful that crowding has been a common issue on vehicles.

To address this challenge, Pace is building a new garage facility in Plainfield to increase vehicle capacity, which will specifically target more buses on the I-55 services. Other improvements, such as new park-n-rides and stations are also being investigated through this and other efforts.

Illinois Department of Transportation

This service is made possible in partnership with IDOT, as the department provides the shoulder space and operating conditions to allow this important transit option to flourish. By continuing to increase bus service along this corridor, Pace and IDOT help reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and offer a competitive and affordable alternative to driving.

Congested expressways in the region stand to benefit from deploying express bus options supported by bus priority infrastructure.

pace

A Pace Express bus operating along Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago, part of the I-55 Bus-on-Shoulder service.

I-294 EXPANSION

Pace currently operates regular fixed-route service along the I-294 Tri-State Tollway in general purpose lanes of the roadway. In 2020, Pace and the RTA initiated a study of the Tri-State from Schaumburg (including a section of I-90) to Harvey to determine what new markets may be served by utilizing new Flex Lanes that the Illinois Tollway is constructing as part of the Central Tri-State project. The study is also identifying feasible locations for new passenger facilities that may be constructed using capital dollars through the Rebuild Illinois program, which would also leverage the separate but related project to improve the Pace Harvey Transportation Center (see A-2 Capital Improvement Projects initiative). New and improved services along this corridor are anticipated to form the backbone of an integrated Rapid Transit network of both Pulse lines and expressway-based services.

I-94 EXPANSION

Pace operates Bus on Shoulder service along the I-94 Edens Expressway. Service in this corridor was in operation prior to IDOT constructing outside shoulder riding capabilities for Pace buses, which has benefited from improvements to on-time performance and reliability. However, initial market assessments conducted in the 2016-2017 North Shore Transit Coordination Study and other staff-led efforts have noted additional demand for service along this highly-congested roadway that connects the Loop and Northwest Side of Chicago with North Shore communities and the employment-rich Lake Cook Road corridor. *Driving Innovation* calls for further study of these markets in the upcoming Network Revitalization initiative and future Rapid Transit Program efforts.

Pace I-90 Barrington Road Station in Hoffman Estates, Illinois.

I-290 EXPANSION

Pace will be conducting a market assessment and service design study for the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway corridor sometime in 2021-2022. Funded through an IDOT Technical Studies grant, the study will be timed to coincide with the Pace A-5 Network Revitalization initiative and the completion of the Tri-State study mentioned on the previous page. Any new service or passenger facilities proposed along this corridor may be coordinated with IDOT's planned reconstruction of the Eisenhower Expressway.

Illinois Department of Transportation

HARLEM AVENUE I-55 STATION FEASIBILITY

Pace will conduct a feasibility study for developing a passenger station along the I-55 Stevenson Expressway at Harlem Avenue, also funded through an IDOT Technical Studies grant. I-55 is a high-priority project given Pace's current operations along this roadway, and plans to expand service via a new garage in Plainfield. Harlem Avenue is also a Near-term Priority Pulse corridor, so an inline station connecting the Harlem Avenue Bridge with I-55 could be among the first Pulse-to-Express transfer locations. The location is partly inspired by the multi-jurisdictional coordination and success of the Barrington Road Station along I-90. Studying a potential station in this part of the region may also help prompt further ideas for expressway-based passenger facilities along other expressway and tollway corridors.

Illinois Department of Transportation

Pace has the opportunity facilitate faster and more convenient travel between Chicago and suburbs for long-distance commuters.

P-3 | Potential COVID-19 Impacts

COVID-19 Impact

Expressway-based projects provide Pace the opportunity facilitate faster and more convenient long-distance travel throughout the region. This will not only help keep Pace relevant in the face of the changing transportation landscape, but will also help ease traffic congestion and air pollution, as well as help the region's economy by providing great employment accessibility. Importantly, while ridership along services like those in the I-55 corridor have dropped during the pandemic, Pace anticipates that the market potential for expressway-based services will rebound. If indeed true, such long-term projects should continue to move forward.