

# TRANSFORMING TRANSIT'S FUTURE



20 ANNUAL REPORT 23



**pace**  
zero emission



# CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

**WE ARE PLEASED TO PRESENT A SUMMARY OF PACE'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING 2023, A REMARKABLE YEAR FILLED WITH HISTORIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS, INNOVATIVE SERVICE LAUNCHES, AND THOUGHTFUL EFFORTS TO CONTINUE STRONG RIDERSHIP GROWTH.**

As you can see in these pages, the Pace Board of Directors and staff continue to excel while also ensuring fiscal responsibility and making the best use of our available resources. We are capitalizing on the strong foundation that has established Pace as the premier suburban transit provider, safely and efficiently serving our region's 8.4 million people.

Many of the projects featured in Pace's 2023 annual report were developed from Pace's strategic vision articulated in *Driving Innovation* and from Pace's commitment to delivering service that can meet our riders' post-pandemic travel needs. The actions this past year include the creation of ReVision, our comprehensive network revitalization and system restructuring plan.

Pace is also committed to sustainability. As I write this message, Pace's dedicated team is diligently working to implement Project Zero — our ambitious plan to convert the entire Pace fleet to zero-emission vehicles by 2040. Along with this past year's zero-emissions fleet plan, Pace will complete a zero-emissions facilities plan in the coming year, add charging equipment and implement additional infrastructure enhancements, and receive 22 additional battery electric buses.

Pace's ability to adapt, innovate, and maintain balanced budgets could not happen without our partners in municipal, township, and county governments. Through my work as a board member of the American Public Transportation Association, I know firsthand that our state and federal leaders understand why transit is critical to a strong quality of life. They see the need for greater investments in transit through laws like *Rebuild Illinois* and the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*.

Our continued partnership and collaboration with our riders, partners, and elected leaders will help ensure another successful year at Pace. Please read on to review our many exciting accomplishments. We look forward to working with you all to implement innovative ideas and vision for a future that is sustainable and accessible to all.

Sincerely,

**RICK KWASNESKI**  
Chairman





# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

# DIRECTORS



**RICHARD A. KWASNESKI**  
Chairman

Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of Northeastern Illinois' Regional Transportation Authority, provides bus, paratransit and vanpool services in Chicago's six-county metropolitan area. Pace is governed by a Board of Directors, comprised of members representing each of the six counties, including six members from suburban Cook County and the City of Chicago's Commissioner for the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. The geographic diversity of representation on the Pace Board ensures stakeholders from all parts of the region have a voice in public transportation policymaking.



**RACHEL ARFA**  
City of Chicago



**CHRISTOPHER S. CANNING**  
North Shore Suburban  
Cook County



**TERRANCE CARR**  
Central Suburban  
Cook County



**DAVID GUERIN**  
North Central Suburban  
Cook County



**KYLE R. HASTINGS**  
Southwest Suburban  
Cook County



**THOMAS D. MARCUCCI**  
DuPage County



**WILLIAM D. MCLEOD**  
Northwest Suburban  
Cook County



**JOHN D. NOAK**  
Will County



**JEFFERY D. SCHIELKE**  
Kane County



**ERIN SMITH**  
McHenry County



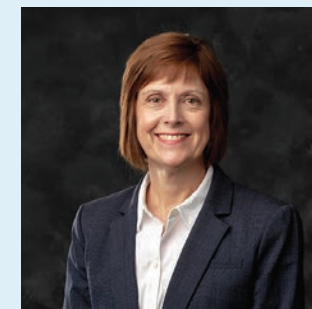
**LINDA SOTO**  
Lake County



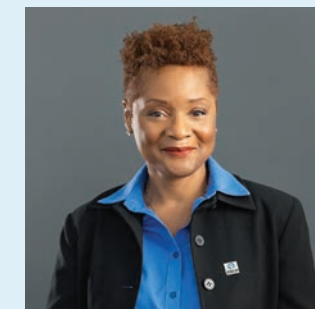
**TERRY R. WELLS**  
South Suburban  
Cook County



**MELINDA J. METZGER**  
Executive Director



**NANCY ZIMMER**  
Chief Administrative Officer/  
General Counsel



**LORRI NEWSON**  
Chief Financial Officer and  
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion  
& Accessibility Officer



**COLETTE THOMAS GORDON**  
Chief Internal Auditor

# DEAR STAKEHOLDERS:

**AS WE LOOK BACK ON 2023, WE CAN CELEBRATE MANY INNOVATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS, ALL OF WHICH WILL SET PACE UP TO CONTINUE GROWING, IMPROVING, AND REIMAGINING OUR TRANSIT SYSTEM AS WE MOVE INTO 2024.**

The profound changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic transformed the way we do business, and our agency is uniquely positioned to adapt and meet our region's evolving mobility needs.

Our innovative spirit is already bringing riders back and attracting new ones. In 2023, Pace rolled out lower fares and additional unlimited-ride passes that integrate services offered by Pace and the Service Boards. We implemented technological upgrades benefiting riders with disabilities and deployed more real-time bus tracker signs throughout the service area.

We successfully secured funding for our first wave of electric vehicles and launched a new user-friendly trip planning platform. We expanded our On Demand program and launched Pace Connect — a new first-mile/last-mile service designed for third-shift workers who commute late at night.

Historic investments in transit infrastructure also took shape. Construction started on a new ADA Paratransit Transfer Facility at our Northwest Transportation Center, while progress continued on our South Campus project in Markham. The Harvey Transportation Center reconstruction project saw significant progress, and we launched the Pulse Dempster Line which led to a 21% increase in ridership along Dempster over 2022.



We look forward to nurturing our innovative spirit in 2024. The Rideshare Access Program (RAP) will offer enhanced, subsidized options for all ADA paratransit customers, enabling them to use rideshare services like UZURV and Via.

Aligning with our strategic plan, *Driving Innovation*, we will strengthen fixed-route transit in high-demand markets while leveraging technology and mobility solutions to better serve our diverse suburban communities. In the coming year, we will embark on the development of ReVision, Pace's network revitalization and system restructuring plan, to meet existing and projected market demands.

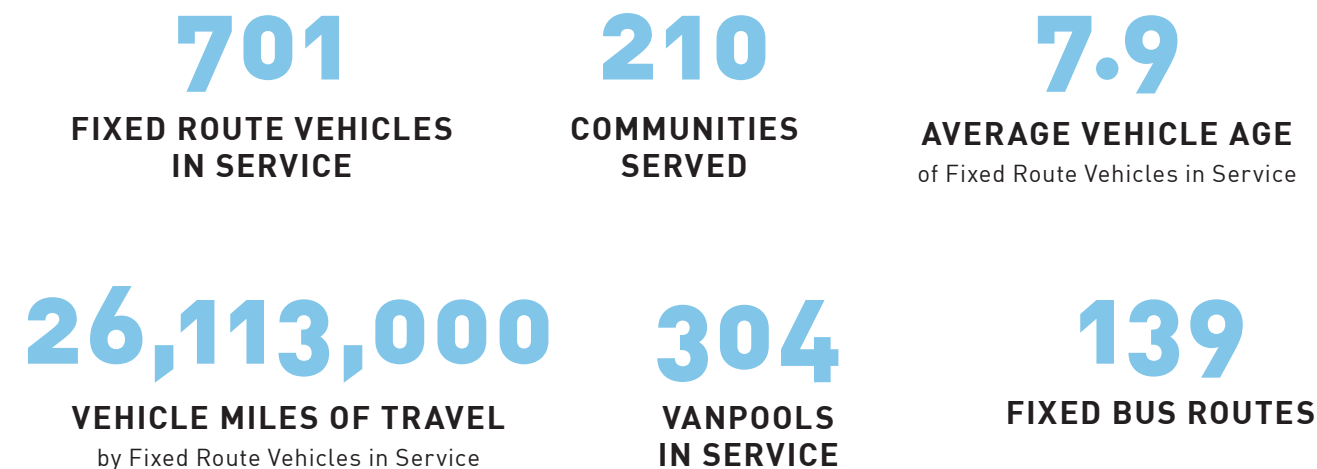
This annual report reflects the hard work of the talented and dedicated Pace team who keep this agency moving forward. As we continue to build a modern, world-class transit system, we are prepared to take on another challenge caused by the pandemic — the looming fiscal cliff facing transportation agencies across the country.

Through collaboration and investment, we will work to address this challenge and keep the momentum to innovate, adapt, and better serve the people of northeastern Illinois. Pace appreciates your continued support.

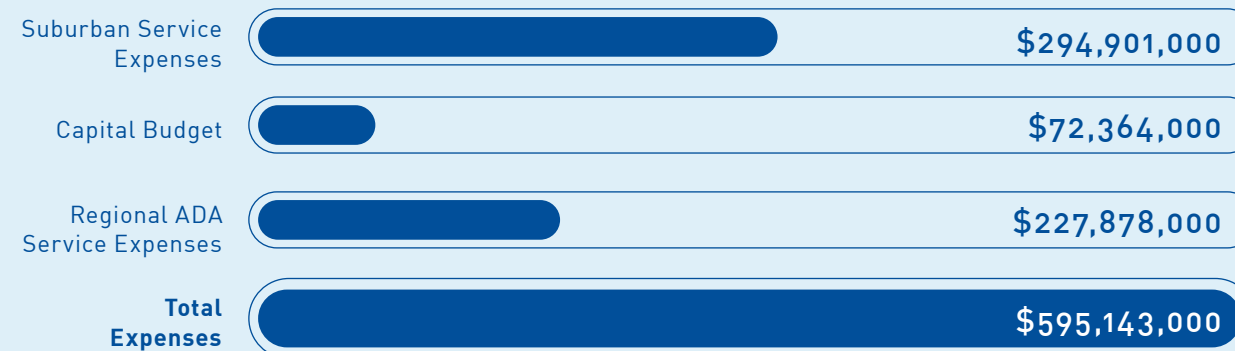
**MELINDA J. METZGER**  
Executive Director

## 2023 RIDERSHIP 19,088,000 TRIPS

By October 2023, daily ridership increased to 70% of its 2019 level.



## 2023 BUDGET





# PACE IS YOUR COMMUNITY PARTNER



PACE IS PROUD TO SUPPORT

## CITIZENS AGAINST ABUSE

25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL VICTORY RALLY AND MARCH

THANK YOU FOR SERVING OUR COMMUNITY.

**WE'RE HIRING**

- ✓ PAID TRAINING
- ✓ COMPETITIVE WAGES
- ✓ EXCELLENT HEALTH CARE BENEFITS

SCAN THE QR CODE OR GO TO [PACEBUS.COM/CAREERS](https://pacebus.com/careers)

 We're driven for you.

Pace recognizes our vital role in the community, not only as a service provider, but as an active participant among the many groups who are seeking to make our communities better places to live. Certainly, Pace's core mission is providing transportation to commuters in northeastern Illinois. However, we can and do contribute in so many other ways, such as supporting the work of local non-profits and uplifting the voices of those who call for a more equitable and sustainable society.

Throughout 2023, Pace partnered with many different non-profit organizations as sponsors of or participants in events. See some examples of our contributions to the fantastic work of these groups:

### GENTLE WARRIOR

February 25, 2023

### WHOLE COMMUNITY TRAINING SUMMIT

March 22, 2023

### WOLVES SPONSORSHIP

April 9, 2023

### TRINITY GOLF EVENT

May 18, 2023

### GREEN DRIVES EXPO

May 18, 2023

### ELGIN PRIDE PARADE

June 3, 2023

### AURORA PRIDE PARADE

June 11, 2023

### LCTA SPONSORSHIP

June 15, 2023

### ACCESS LIVING GALA

June 15, 2023

### LAKE COUNTY JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL

June 17, 2023

### SHORE COMMUNITY SERVICES SPONSORSHIP

June 23, 2023

### CHICAGO DISABILITY PRIDE PARADE

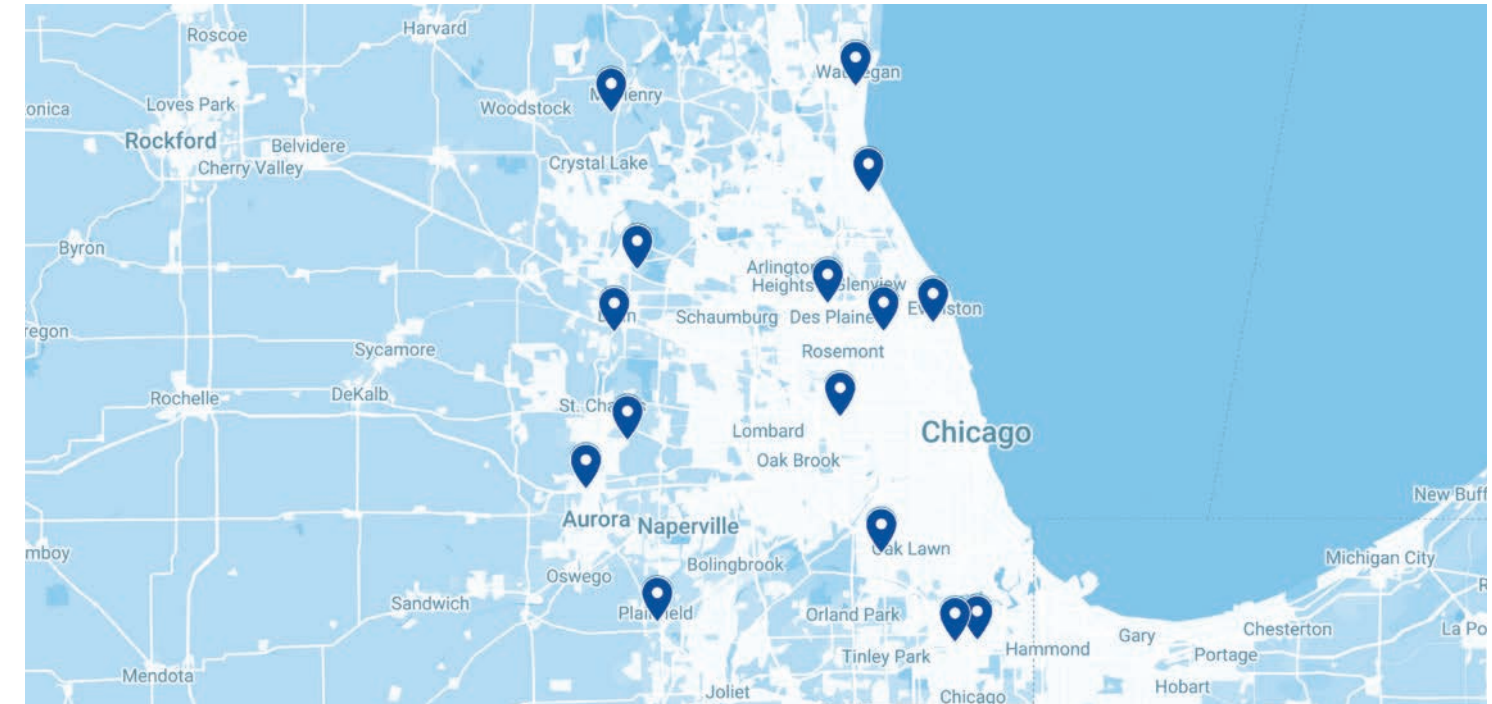
July 22, 2023

### LIGHTHOUSE RISE TO SHINE EVENT

October 22, 2023

# PACE'S FACILITIES

Pace operates its fixed route bus service from 14 different facilities listed below and performs bus acceptance and maintenance at a 15th site. Pace's newest bus garage is Heritage Division in Plainfield. The Acceptance Facility will be relocating in early 2024 to a building under construction in Markham.



## GARAGE/DIVISION

## ADDRESS

West	3500 W. Lake Street, Melrose Park, IL 60160
Southwest	9889 S. Industrial Drive, Bridgeview, IL 60455
South	2101 W. 163rd Place, Markham, IL 60428
Heritage	14539 S. Depot Drive, Plainfield, IL 60544
Village of Niles	6859 Touhy Ave., Niles, IL 60714
City of Highland Park	1150 Half Day Road, Highland Park, IL 60035
McHenry	5007 Prime Parkway, McHenry, IL 60050
North	1400 W. 10th St., Waukegan, IL 60085
Northwest	900 E. Northwest Highway, Des Plaines, IL 60016
North Shore	2330 Oakton St., Evanston, IL 60202-2700
River	975 S. State Street, Elgin, IL 60123-7654
East Dundee	401 Christina Drive, East Dundee, IL 60118
Fox Valley	400 Overland Drive, North Aurora, IL 60542
Acceptance Facility	405 Taft Drive, South Holland, IL 60473

## PULSE DEMPSTER LINE OPENS FOR BUSINESS

On August 13, 2023, Pace launched a “sneak preview” of the Pulse Dempster Line, the newest rapid transit service in northeastern Illinois, offering faster, more frequent service with limited stops every Sunday. Then, on October 29, daily service on the Pulse Dempster Line launched, with 16 new rapid transit stations open to the public along what had already been a heavily traveled route in northern Cook County.

The route primarily travels along Dempster Street between the Davis Street CTA Station in Evanston and O’Hare International Airport. Like the Pulse Milwaukee Line project that was completed in 2019, the Pulse Dempster Line project includes upgraded stations and buses with improved onboard amenities. The Pulse Dempster Line improvements also allowed Pace to reduce frequency on Pace Route 250, a route that provides local service along the same corridor.

Once the ongoing construction concludes, Pulse Dempster Line riders can comfortably wait for the bus at any of the 29 total boarding locations with new features and amenities including a snow-melt system within concrete pads, heated shelters, bicycle racks, and attention-grabbing vertical markers with bus tracker signs.

**“THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT, OUTREACH AND COORDINATION WITH COMMUNITIES, BUSINESSES, PUBLIC AGENCIES, INTEREST GROUPS, AND THE PUBLIC HAS HELPED PACE GATHER AND INCORPORATE STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK INTO THE SERVICE’S DESIGN.”**

**Melinda Metzger**  
Pace Executive Director

Customers responded positively to the Sunday-only launch of the Pulse Dempster Line. In only the first few weeks of “sneak preview” service, average Sunday ridership in the Dempster corridor for August 2023 was 38% higher than August 2022, and September 2023 ridership was 12% higher than September 2022 levels.

On August 9, Pace held an event to unveil the Pulse Dempster station in downtown Des Plaines, with State Senator Laura Murphy



and Des Plaines Mayor Andrew Goczkowski joining Pace officials to celebrate the new station and the launch of Sunday-only service on the Pulse Dempster Line.

“What a fabulous opportunity to help move people quickly throughout the northwest suburbs,” said Senator Murphy. “I’m really proud to work with Pace, proud to see how they interconnect with communities and other transportation systems, and how all these governmental agencies can work together and produce something that really helps people’s lives.”

“The Pace Pulse Dempster line will improve the lives of Des Plaines residents and beyond. With multiple stops for this line within our city limits, we are excited about the opportunity for more efficient trips around town and to O’Hare,” said Mayor Goczkowski.

Then, on November 10, Pace welcomed state, county, and local leaders to celebrate the launch of daily service on the Pulse Dempster Line. Pace Chairman Rick Kwasneski welcomed guests and noted, “Ridership is already up approximately 7% compared to last year, a promising statistic which shows that faster, more frequent service is a key part of bringing riders back to transit and attracting new passengers.”

“As you arrived, you may have stopped for a photo on our purple carpet. This is part of our marketing campaign for Pulse Dempster called ‘Catching Greens,’ a nod to the service’s use of Transit

Signal Priority technology to shorten red lights and lengthen green lights,” said Pace Director Chris Canning. “This means riders of Pulse buses will truly catch more greens, reducing trip times up to 15 minutes for passengers travelling between Evanston and O’Hare.”

Thanks to cutting-edge Transit Signal Priority (TSP) technology that leverages traffic signal timing adjustments with no impact to general traffic flow, buses navigate through congestion more efficiently to stay on schedule and reduce travel times for commuters. Pulse Dempster buses communicate directly with traffic control to minimize red lights and lengthen green lights every day.



TSP technology has been shown to reduce bus travel times in major cities throughout the country. In general, this innovative technology has helped reduce bus travel times up to 10% and reduce congestion up to 50% at certain intersections, according to the National Association of City Transportation Officials. TSP is also deployed on other high-traffic corridors for the benefit of Pace buses throughout the region.

“Our public transit system is the lifeblood of our economy, from the suburbs to the city, and beyond,” said State Senator Ram Villivalam. “I am grateful to the leadership and staff of Pace for their work in taking another major step to ensure that our public transit system is reliable, accessible, affordable, and environmentally conscious for all our residents.”

State Representative Martin Moylan also spoke at the event. “I am proud to be here today to see the opening of this new line. Our public transit infrastructure is something we should all take great pride in. Not only does it help people move through the city quickly and affordably, but it creates jobs and opportunities that help our transit infrastructure overall.”

Pulse Dempster service improves access to a variety of major destinations, schools, places of employment, and more including the O’Hare Multimodal Facility, Lutheran General Hospital, Maine East High School, and Notre Dame High School. Pulse Dempster riders can easily connect to other Pace and CTA bus routes, the CTA Yellow and Purple lines, as well as Metra’s Union Pacific North, Northwest, and North Central Service rail lines. These improved travel connections provide passengers with an abundance of local and regional travel options.

“Commuting patterns have changed dramatically post-pandemic, and adjusting to those changes, particularly in the suburbs, can be challenging. I am proud to say that Pace has embraced that challenge by making tremendous progress on the implementation of innovative, efficient, and flexible service options to serve current riders and attract new riders to the system,” said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger.

Pulse Dempster buses come equipped with modern amenities for passengers on board, including free Wi-Fi service, as well as easy-to-find branded stations with heated shelters and real-time bus tracker information. Pulse Dempster also improves ADA accessibility, featuring raised bus platforms at all stations that conveniently melt ice and snow during inclement weather.

Other dignitaries at the launch event included Representative Michelle Mussman, Cook County Commissioner Josina Morita, Cook County Commissioner Maggie Trevor, and Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen, who spoke about the importance of public transportation for their constituents and the economy. The American Legion Post 134 honor guard presented the colors in recognition of Veterans Day.





## PACE ROLLS OUT LOWERED FARES IN FEBRUARY

PASSES	PREVIOUS FARE	NEW FARE
NEW: PACE/CTA 1-DAY PASS	N/A	\$5.00
NEW: PACE/CTA 3-DAY PASS	N/A	\$15.00
PACE/CTA 7-DAY PASS	\$25.00	\$20.00

TRANSFERS	PREVIOUS FARE		NEW FARE	
	Full Fare	Reduced Fare	Full Fare	Reduced Fare
PACE TRANSFERS TO PACE REGULAR ROUTES <small>(with Ventra transit value only)</small>	\$0.30	\$0.20	\$0.00	\$0.00
PACE TRANSFERS TO PACE PREMIUM ROUTES <small>(with Ventra transit value only)</small>	\$2.80	\$1.45	\$2.50	\$1.25
TRANSFERS TO PACE PREMIUM ROUTES <small>(with Pace/CTA 7-Day Pass, Pace/CTA 30-Day Pass, Pace 30-Day Pass)</small>	\$2.25	\$1.15	\$2.25	\$1.10
TRANSFERS TO PACE PREMIUM ROUTES <small>(with New Pace/CTA 1-Day Pass and New Pace/CTA 3-Day Pass)</small>	\$2.25	\$1.15	\$2.25	\$1.10

### PACE HAS MADE IT EASIER AND MORE AFFORDABLE TO USE OUR MANY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES!

Public transportation is the more affordable travel option compared to cars when considering the cost to purchase a vehicle and the ongoing expenses for gasoline, parking, tolls, maintenance, repairs, title registration, license plates, vehicle stickers, and auto insurance ... The list of expenses can seem endless!

In February 2023, we made public transportation even more economical by launching new or cheaper pass products that reduce costs for Pace and CTA riders.

When paying through a Ventra account, riders now can transfer from one Pace bus to another Pace bus for free! To take advantage of free transfers, you must use a

Ventra card or Ventra-linked smart device and take additional rides within two hours of your first ride.

For those who enjoy the convenience and affordability of unlimited ride passes, Pace introduced a new Pace/CTA 1-Day Pass for \$5 and a new Pace/CTA 3-Day Pass for \$15. Additionally, the Pace/CTA 7-Day Pass is now only \$20. These affordable pass options include unlimited rides on Pace and CTA buses and trains.

The previously existing 30-Day Passes are still available. Additionally, riders who transfer to or from Pace Premium routes also now pay reduced fares.

## NEW OVERNIGHT PACE CONNECT SERVICE LAUNCHED JUNE 27

Another improvement in a long line of recent innovations launched June 27, when we announced Pace Connect, the new late-night service which connects two of our busiest transit centers to local jobs and residential areas.

On the day of the launch, at Pace’s Harvey Transportation Center, Pace and local officials celebrated the launch of Pace Connect Harvey Area, one of two new Pace Connect services designed to provide a first-mile/last-mile option for transit users during late-night hours. The service, which is partly funded by grants from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and Cook County, provides crucial transportation connections geared toward third-shift workers.

The new shared-ride service allows riders to book trips through the new Pace Connect app (available in App Store and Google Play) or through a call center at a moment’s notice. Riders can use the service to easily connect with nearby transit stations, or in some cases, be dropped off at their home.

Late-night riders have already flocked to the fledgling service. Ridership has averaged more than 120 trips per week during fall 2023.

The app, which is powered by Via, groups riders into one vehicle by using algorithms to match people headed in the same direction — maximizing service efficiency and affordability. Rides cost \$2 each (or less if riders pay through Ventra and transfer from a fixed-route service). Riders can pay by credit card through the Pace Connect app or by using in-vehicle Ventra Card readers.

“We’re excited to unveil yet another innovation today,” said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger. “This addition to Pace’s family of services provides a new option for third-shift workers, enhancing job access for underserved communities. It is important that Pace continues to explore innovative approaches to providing service as northeastern Illinois’ transit system faces a fiscal cliff in the coming years.”

Pace Chairman Rick Kwasneski said this new service embodies Pace’s spirit of partnership. “This is yet another example of Pace working with our peers at RTA and Cook County to enhance and integrate service in the south suburbs,” he said. “Riders can now use Pace, CTA, and Metra service at all hours and still have a way to get from our transportation center to work or to home.”

Other officials who attended the launch event included Congresswoman Robin Kelly, Harvey Mayor Christopher J. Clark, RTA Board Member Elizabeth Doody Gorman, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways Superintendent Jennifer “Sis” Killen, Pace Director Terry R. Wells, and Pace Director David Guerin.

In the Harvey Area zone, riders can book a Pace Connect ride to travel between Pace’s Harvey Transportation Center and any address in a defined zone surrounding the facility. This service presents a new way to connect with Pace Route 352 and the Metra Electric District rail line. Employers such as University of Chicago Ingalls Memorial Hospital, South Suburban College, and the Amazon warehouse in Markham are located within this zone.

**“RIDERS CAN NOW USE PACE, CTA, AND METRA SERVICE AT ALL HOURS AND STILL HAVE A WAY TO GET FROM OUR TRANSPORTATION CENTER TO WORK OR TO HOME.”**

**Rick Kwasneski**  
Pace Chairman

Riders in the O’Hare Businesses zone can book a Pace Connect ride to travel between select employers at the O’Hare Airport cargo area and the Rosemont CTA Blue Line Station, where they can connect with the CTA’s “L” rail service. Airline and mail cargo areas, airport hotels, airport catering sites, and numerous other businesses are located within this zone.







## MORE PROGRESS ON HARVEY TRANSPORTATION CENTER RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Pace has been working with Metra and Harvey officials and other partners to modernize and reconstruct the Harvey Transportation Center, one of the busiest transit hubs in Pace's system, and relocate it adjacent to the nearby Harvey station on the Metra Electric District line.

In January 2023, Pace and Metra officials presented the public and leaders in Harvey with several possible design concepts for the new bus canopy and Metra station entrance at the Harvey Transportation Center.

Based on the public feedback and staff input, the preferred concept design (pictured above) has been selected to continue design work. Pace's partner Metra is leading the construction effort. With help from a \$20 million federal RAISE grant awarded in 2022, construction is scheduled to begin in 2024.

## HIRING EVENTS AND COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS HELP PACE FILL POSITIONS 'ON THE SPOT'

Building on a successful campaign in 2022 to hire hundreds of new bus operators, mechanics, and support staff, Pace continued its aggressive efforts to grow a robust workforce in 2023 and ensure stable service for our tens of thousands of daily riders.

Pace held several "Hire on the Spot" events at Pace headquarters and bus garages. Pace hosts these events regularly to proactively fill bus operator, mechanic, and administrative openings — positions that have been in short supply for transit agencies throughout the country in the post-pandemic era.

These fast-acting events allow interested candidates to meet with Pace representatives, apply, interview, test, and receive job offers all in one day. People interested in becoming professional bus operators attend a 90-minute assessment session and only need their Secretary of State driver's abstract/MVR to be considered. Pace managers and human resources conduct interviews, review test results, and provide job offers on the spot. In the first half of 2023, Pace made 204 job offers at 15 "Hire on the Spot" events.

As part of our ongoing efforts to remove financial barriers for the next generation of professional bus drivers and mechanics, Pace also provides free Class "B" commercial driver's license (CDL) permit courses and paid training for bus operators and mechanics. We couldn't do this without our partnership with area colleges, including Olive Harvey College, Harper College, South Suburban College, Joliet Junior College, Elgin Community College, Triton College, Prairie State College, College of Lake County, Moraine Valley Community College, and College of DuPage.

Colleges and Pace also have teamed up to offer customized two-week programs to assist qualified applicants in obtaining their CDL permit. Pace covers the costs of students' tuition, training, books, fees, and other expenses associated with the program.



"Pace offers rewarding careers and a path to success for people who are passionate about public service. We are thrilled to partner with Triton College on this effort," said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger. "Offering this course for free creates a win-win for everyone. Those looking for a new career get access to the free instruction they need, and Pace gets the operators it needs to keep providing the essential service our region relies on."

"The Pace and Triton College partnership allows Triton to work toward its mission of educating and serving the community," said Dr. Bianca Sola-Perkins, Dean of Continuing Education at Triton College. "The college strives to offer the community equitable opportunities for growth and success. This initiative provides individuals with an accelerated pathway towards a new career, creating a unique workforce development opportunity for the district."

Pace's partnerships with area colleges and our successful "Hire on the Spot" events are major reasons why Pace was able to hire nearly 530 new bus operators, mechanics, and support staff during the first half of 2023.





## PACE RECOGNIZES PRIDE MONTH WITH COLORFUL BUS AT LOCAL LGBTQ+ PARADES

While Pace's commitment to diversity and inclusiveness is a serious initiative, Pace did inject a bit of fun into the effort of highlighting our commitment at two LGBTQ+ pride parades in Kane County this year. On June 3, Pace's "Onboard with Pride" bus grabbed plenty of attention in Elgin's pride parade. Pace staff marched alongside the bus in the parade and interacted with the lively crowd.

Then, the next weekend, Pace's pride bus made another appearance, this time at Aurora's June 11 pride parade. Another big crowd welcomed Pace's colorful bus and staff once again was on hand to express our support for the cause and distribute educational materials.

The decorated bus continued to travel around the western suburbs throughout the year, as Pace's support for equity and inclusion doesn't stop at the end of pride month.



# PACE JOINS DISABILITY PRIDE PARADE



On July 22, 2023, a lively group of Pace employees marched in Chicago's Disability Pride Parade alongside Pace's "Disability Pride" bus. Pace has long been a national leader in providing transportation to people with disabilities. Not only is our entire fleet of large and small buses accessible to everyone, but Pace also operates one of the most robust and technologically advanced Americans with Disabilities Paratransit services in the United States.





# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY EFFORTS CONTINUE

Among the hallmarks of Executive Director Melinda Metzger’s administration is a renewed emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Those principles color all the work Pace does, from hiring new employees, to awarding contracts to vendors, to implementing new services in underserved areas.

To help give certain businesses a leg up, Pace has established a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program in accordance with regulations set by the U.S. Department of Transportation, 49

CFR part 26. DBE programs are intended to provide contracting opportunities to small businesses owned and controlled by individuals who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Per federal guidelines, Pace sets a DBE goal for each publicly bid contract, and prospective bidders must show they intend to meet that goal at the time of bid, and then report on their progress towards that goal as part of their work with Pace. Pace’s DBE Policy Statement was updated on January 10, 2023, to ensure continued compliance with federal guidelines.

Diversity contributes to Pace’s strength. Since its inception, Pace has had a very diverse workforce, and that trend has continued with the flurry of hiring activity in the past three years. See below for the current makeup of the Pace workforce. Of note, 75% of employees are non-white.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PACE’S WORKFORCE

AS OF: 11.13.2023

W - White, Not Hispanic	B - Black/ African American	H - Hispanic or Latino
A - Asian	I - American Indian/ Alaska Native	P - Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Island
T - Two or More Races		

JOB CATEGORIES	TOTAL			MALE							FEMALE						
	Total	Male	Female	W	B	H	A	I	P	T	W	B	H	A	I	P	T
OFFICIALS AND ADMINISTRATORS	89	62	27	40	12	8	2	0	0	0	16	10	0	1	0	0	0
PROFESSIONALS	297	182	92	92	44	32	10	1	0	3	51	40	14	8	0	0	2
TECHNICIANS	8	8	0	4	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT (including clerical and sales)	67	13	54	9	0	2	0	0	0	2	24	15	10	2	0	0	3
SKILLED CRAFT WORKERS	132	131	1	49	28	46	7	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SERVICE/MAINTENANCE	1190	732	458	142	437	113	15	3	0	22	26	382	33	1	1	0	15
TOTAL WORKFORCE	1783	1128	655	336	522	203	35	4	0	28	118	447	57	12	1	0	20





## PROGRESS CONTINUES ON PULSE LINES ALONG HALSTED AND 95TH STREET

Throughout the past year, Pace continued to collaborate and advance projects to establish Pulse lines along Halsted and 95th Street.

In June 2023, the U.S. Department of Transportation also awarded Pace a \$20 million RAISE grant that will help construct the Pulse Halsted line and establish rapid transit service in the area. The grant funding will help improve bus speed and reliability along the line, increasing service frequency and reducing transportation barriers for riders in the area.

The project area spans approximately 11 miles of South Halsted Street, from the Pace Harvey Transportation Center to 79th Street. Station design began in 2023 to determine what segments of the project corridor will see Pulse service improvements with corresponding station construction, and where those stations should be located. With funding now identified, Pace expects the Pulse Halsted Line to open for business in 2027.

Building on public hearings and corridor advisory group meetings in late 2022, Pace continued developmental and federally required environmental review work on the Pulse 95th Street line. The project's construction already is fully funded thanks to a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement grant from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. The Pulse 95th Street Line is expected to be in service in 2027.



## ALTERNATIVE TRANSIT SERVICES CONTINUE TO ENHANCE OPTIONS FOR RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES

### RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES HAVE MORE OPTIONS NOW THAN EVER TO GET AROUND NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS.

In February 2023, the Taxi Access Program in Chicago performed the most rides on a single day in the post-pandemic era, when 3,415 people used the service. The program requires all Chicago taxi providers to accept reduced rates for riders who are eligible for ADA paratransit services and take same-day trips that begin in Chicago.

A similar program, called the DuPage Uber Access Program, partners with ride-sharing services and transportation network companies (TNCs). Under the program, Pace subsidizes trips (up to \$30) for riders who choose to take Uber instead of ADA paratransit. The pilot program allows eligible riders to ride

free within the DuPage ADA Paratransit zone when taking any Uber trip that is less than \$30.

Ridership on DuPage Uber Access increased from 1,114 in March 2022 to 3,573 in March 2023. During that same period, ridership on the 'legacy' ADA Paratransit service in DuPage remained steady (an average of 3,700 per month) during that period. Thus, Pace is now able to accommodate almost twice as many total trips, with Uber providing nearly half of that total.

Another contractor, UZURV, provides additional ADA paratransit service throughout Chicago, as well as Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties. That new service, which began December 2022, provides additional transportation options for riders without diverting operators from existing bus

and taxi carriers that provide Pace paratransit service. Ridership on the UZURV service increased from less than 3,000 per month at the beginning of 2023 to almost 6,000 per month by fall 2023. The contract with UZURV has helped increase service capacity throughout the region, address operator shortages, and accommodate projected ridership growth.

In late 2023, the Pace Board approved plans for the Rideshare Access Program, which will offer a low-cost ridehailing option to suburban residents certified for ADA Paratransit. Just as Pace's Taxi Access Program offers people with disabilities in Chicago the option to hail a taxi—with Pace subsidizing their taxi fare—this new Rideshare Access Program will offer suburbanites the option to hail a ride using one of the transportation network company apps, with Pace subsidizing that ridehail fare.



## ANOTHER ON DEMAND EXPANSION OFFERS NEW TRANSIT ACCESS FOR LAKE COUNTY RESIDENTS

On August 28, 2023, the Round Lake Area On Demand zone doubled in size, offering residents of Fox Lake, Long Lake, Ingleside, and Round Lake Heights a new reservation-based travel option. The expanded zone is bounded on the north by Monaville Road and Fox Lake, on the west by IL 12, and on the south by Big Hollow Road, Long Lake Road, and Round Lake Road. The new zone will enhance the area's overall transit network by providing new connections with Pace Routes 570 and 806 and with Metra's MD-North and NCS Lines. The service continues to have timed transfers at the College of Lake County and operate weekday service between 6:00am and 6:15pm. Service will be operated using multiple vehicles to provide additional capacity.

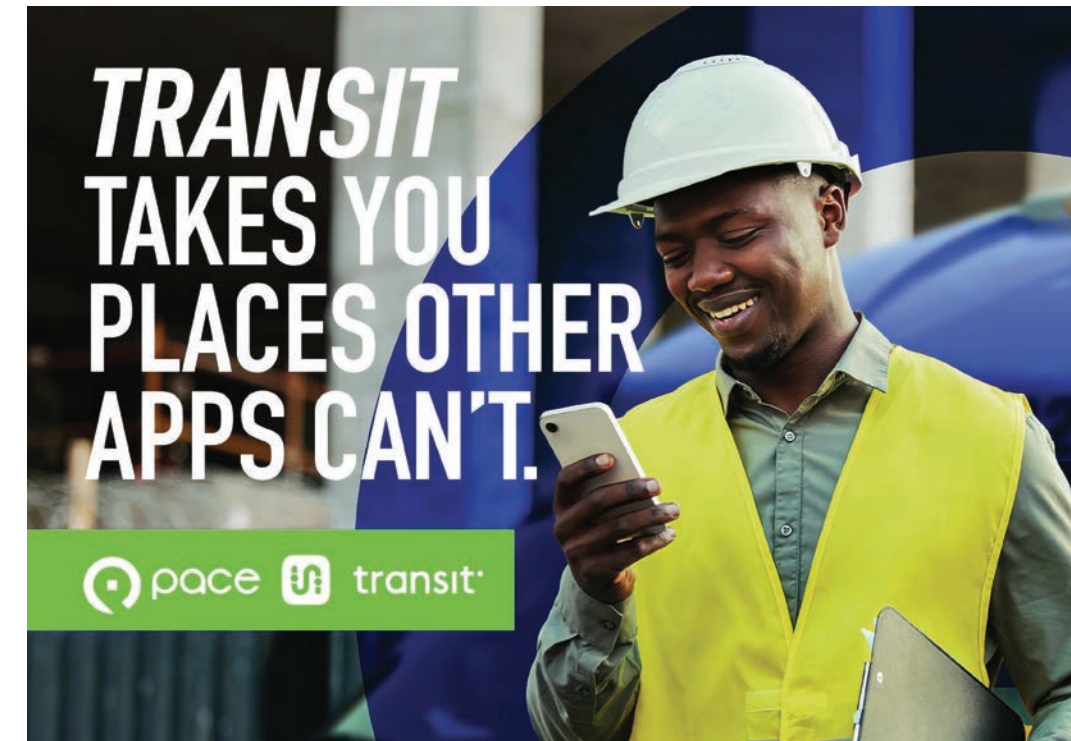
Pace and local officials celebrated the expansion with an event in Round Lake Beach on October 5. Pace On Demand is an innovative alternative to traditional bus service which offers a reservation-based, shared-ride service in 10

designated service areas throughout the suburban region at the same low fare as our fixed route bus services (\$2 with Ventra, \$2.25 with cash).

"This exciting program will increase access to opportunity, employment, education, and more for the people of Lake County," said Pace Director Linda Soto. "It means increased accessibility, enhanced mobility, and stronger connections to transit services, businesses, and jobs in our area."

By September 2023, ridership on the Round Lake Area On Demand was already up 58% since the beginning of the year. "I'm proud of this service expansion and the tremendous work Pace has undertaken to enhance our family of services and create a strong network of access throughout our region, including the Round Lake area," said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger. "Our growing On Demand services in Northeastern Illinois truly reflect our commitment to finding innovative solutions that can help build a more comprehensive public transportation system for our region."

The Round Lake Area On Demand expansion was modeled after last year's similar expansion of the Naperville-Aurora On Demand service. The expanded service in the Naperville-Aurora area represented Pace's first-ever On Demand zone to use two in-service vehicles--and passengers have responded. Before the expansion, the Naperville-Aurora On Demand service averaged 28 riders a day. Since service expanded June 2022, On Demand ridership in that area has continued to increase, now averaging 50 riders per day.



## PACE OFFERS UPGRADED FUNCTIONALITY TO RIDERS WHO USE THE TRANSIT APP

The Transit mobile app is now Pace's recommended trip planning app, as it not only provides real-time public transit data in more than 300 metropolitan areas around the world but, as a result from a Pace partnership, now offers features that no other app does—most importantly, showing Pace's flexible, reservation-based transit options in trip plan results. It also has more accurate real-time departure predictions and crowding information to show passengers how full buses may be based on recent ridership.

Transit's trip planner integrates Pace's On Demand, Pace Connect and VanGo services along with Pace, CTA, and Metra fixed route transit options together with results that include ride hailing, biking, walking, and more to give users the best possible trip. This functionality is known as mobility-as-a-service. Pace Connect services were available in the Transit app on June 27, and the On Demand integration was launched November 8, 2023.

The On Demand integration was accompanied by the launch of the On Demand app, which is used for booking On Demand trips and reviewing trip status. That app works in conjunction

with the Transit app for a user-friendly process to plan and then book a ride.

Pace riders are automatically offered the upgraded ("Royale") version of the app, which shows scheduled arrivals/departures for the whole day along with some fun app customization options. The Transit app's functionality includes trip planning, route information, real time departures, bus tracking, service cancellation alerts, crowding information, and notifications. Pace riders used the Transit app more than 500,000 times per month by the end of 2023.

Planning a trip is easy. When you first open the app, it uses your location to pinpoint transit options closest to you, including On Demand, Pace Connect, and VanGo services, if applicable. The route display provides pertinent information such as the route name, direction, and stop name. Users who want Transit to notify them exactly when they should start walking to catch the bus, should launch the GO feature. GO provides step-by-step guidance for the whole trip.



## PACE MAKING PROGRESS ON CONVERSION TO ZERO-EMISSIONS FLEET

Pace took several critical steps in 2023 in the process of converting our entire fleet to zero-emissions buses, along with the infrastructure implementation at eleven bus garages. Dubbed Project Zero, this ambitious plan recognizes our responsibility for pollution reduction as an operator of hundreds of vehicles in our region. Reducing our carbon footprint and improving the quality of our community's environment is one of Pace's top priorities as identified by Driving Innovation, Pace's strategic plan.

### PACE HAS COMMITTED TO MAKING THE NORTH DIVISION IN WAUKEGAN A ZERO-EMISSION-ONLY FACILITY BY 2026 AND TO CONVERTING PACE'S ENTIRE BUS FLEET TO ZERO-EMISSION VEHICLES BY 2040. THIS YEAR, PACE:

- 1: Put an electric bus in service on Route 381 on 95th Street in southern Cook County. This deployment allowed staff to evaluate the unique capabilities of an electric bus on the schedule and other behind-the-scenes adjustments that are needed to ensure the bus is properly charged while it operates service for passengers throughout the day. This deployment also involved the installation of an electric charging station at Pace's Southwest Division in Bridgeview, where the electric bus is housed.
- 2: Installed an electric charging station at Pace's Heritage Division in Plainfield, in anticipation of several electric buses being housed there in 2024.
- 3: In 2023, Pace awarded a contract to design and construct an outdoor space that will become an electric bus charging station at our North Division in Waukegan. This outdoor space will eventually house 12 electric buses while we prepare the facility to accommodate the operation of electric vehicles indoors.
- 4: Purchased our first electric paratransit vehicle in November, which is scheduled to be delivered by the end of the year.
- 5: Drafted a facilities plan, scheduled for publication in early 2024, which will guide the agency's efforts to convert all bus garages to zero-emissions fueling stations by 2040.



## PACE AND CONGRESSMAN SCHNEIDER CELEBRATE GRANT FOR ELECTRIC BUSES



### On March 20, 2023, Congressman Brad Schneider (IL-10) joined Pace and local officials to celebrate a Community Project Funding grant that provides Pace with \$1.9 million for electric buses and helps the agency reach its goal of a zero-emissions fleet.

When combined with Pace's required local match, the grant will help add two electric buses at the North Division facility in Waukegan, which will be the first of Pace's garages to be fully converted to a zero-emissions fleet.

During the event, Congressman Schneider saw Pace's first electric bus while visiting the North Division facility. Pace Chairman Rick Kwasneski, Director Linda Soto, Director Chris Canning, and Executive Director Melinda Metzger also attended the event in Waukegan, along with Kevin S. Considine, President and CEO of Lake County Partners, and Waukegan Mayor Ann Taylor.

"Today, we are announcing new federal funding to electrify the Pace bus fleet. These buses are a small but necessary step in our goal of beating the existential threat of climate change. They are a solution that creates a safe, secure, and clean environment for our families and our communities in Illinois, and they save us money for our transit system in the long term," said Congressman Schneider.

"It's a simple fact that, when commuters ride public transit instead of driving their own cars, air quality improves. Pace also recognizes our responsibility for pollution reduction as an operator of hundreds of vehicles in our region," said Chairman Kwasneski. "This is why one of Pace's top priorities is to reduce our carbon footprint and improve the quality of our community's environment."

Pace is committed to converting its entire fleet to a zero-emission fleet by 2040 as part of our Project Zero initiative.

This ambitious and significant investment includes the purchase of more than 700 new buses (at a cost of \$1.2 million each) and upgrades to 10 bus garages (at a cost of more than \$200 million each). Pace is incredibly grateful for the funding provided by Congressman Schneider and his colleagues in Congress.



## PACE AND CONGRESSMAN FOSTER CELEBRATE GRANT FOR PARK-N-RIDE SITE

Pace hosted an event May 19, 2023, with Congressman Bill Foster (IL-11), Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant and Bolingbrook Mayor Mary Alexander-Basta to celebrate another Community Project Funding grant.

Congressman Foster secured the funding to help create a passenger waiting area for passengers at Pace’s Old Chicago (Bolingbrook) Park-n-Ride site. The project will provide riders with a more comfortable place to wait for the bus.

“Thanks to Congressman Foster, a new waiting area will take this facility to the next level and make using public transit a much more attractive option for riders,” said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger. “Because Pace and our sister agencies in Northeastern Illinois are facing a ‘fiscal cliff’ after 2025, we need to take advantage of every opportunity to enhance service within our limited budget. This funding from Congressman Foster does just that. It offers benefits to transit riders in this community, and attracts new ones, without a need for new operating funding.”

The new building in Bolingbrook will shield waiting riders from inclement weather. The waiting area will include modern amenities, such as restrooms and a vending machine for reloading Ventra Cards. Riders of all abilities now can access the facility thanks in part to this funding.

This facility already has seen recent upgrades, including an increase in the number of parking spots and the installation of an electronic bus tracker sign.

“With a growing population in the far suburbs, it’s important that we keep up with the demand for safe and reliable public transportation options — and that’s exactly what Pace’s Park-n-Ride represents,” said Congressman Foster. “I was proud to secure \$1.2 million in Community Project Funding to support the construction of this new, fully accessible indoor facility. This project will help connect passengers to work, schools, local businesses, and more, and produce positive economic and environmental impacts for the community.”

The Old Chicago (Bolingbrook) Park-n-Ride is served by Pace’s I-55 bus-on-shoulder service, which has been one of the most successful services in the agency’s history.

A change in state law in 2011 made bus-on-shoulder service possible in Northeastern Illinois. In the first eight years since Pace was allowed to use the service, bus ridership on the I-55 corridor increased almost 700%. Just as importantly, on-time performance also improved. It now averages 90%, up substantially from the previous average of less than 70%.

“This phenomenal success led to what we in the public transit business call good problems to have — overflowing buses and overflowing Park-n-Ride lots along the I-55 corridor. As we emerge from the pandemic, ridership continues to grow and improved passenger facilities, like the one we will soon see here, will be a key part of making sure that trend continues,” said Pace Chairman Rick Kwasneski.



## PACE AND CONGRESSMAN GARCIA CELEBRATE GRANT FOR SIGNAL PRIORITY

Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger celebrated federal funding secured by Congressman Jesus “Chuy” Garcia (IL-4) at an event on May 2, 2023.

This grant will create transit signal priority (TSP) along two corridors--Harlem Avenue (between Cermak Road and Ogden Avenue) and along Cermak Road (from the 54th/Cermak Pink Link station to Harlem Avenue) in western Cook County. These two corridors have some of the heaviest bus ridership in Pace’s service area, and both are top priorities for construction of a Pulse (rapid transit) Line.

Transit signal priority technology has been successful in other corridors in reducing travel time for bus riders, and

Pace expects similar results in these two important corridors. This infrastructure work also sets the stage for Pace’s forthcoming Pulse Lines on Harlem and Cermak.

TSP creates shorter travel times for bus riders because it allows buses to communicate with traffic signals to shorten red lights and lengthen green lights for buses. It also makes transit more reliable and more attractive by giving buses an advantage over regular auto traffic. In essence, transit signal priority puts the “rapid” in “rapid transit”—and thus is a key element to making Pulse a rapid service.

“Because Pace and our sister agencies in northeastern Illinois are facing

a ‘fiscal cliff’ after 2025, we need to take advantage of every opportunity to make our operations more efficient and equitable by enhancing service within our limited budget,” said Metzger. “This funding from Congressman Garcia does just that—offers benefits to transit riders in this area while actually saving Pace operating funding.”

The project, once implemented, offers immediate travel time benefits for riders of Pace Routes 307 and 322 while laying the groundwork for the eventual construction of Pace’s Pulse Harlem and Cermak Lines. The project in total costs \$1,050,000. Pace seeks to deploy the equipment at 30 traffic signals.





## ILLINOIS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION CONTINUES TO SUPPORT PACE WITH FUNDING REQUESTS TO BENEFIT RIDERS

In July, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee approved the FY24 appropriations bill for transportation, housing, and urban development. Pace was pleased to learn that five different members of the U.S. House sponsored Community Project Funding grants for Pace. While this appropriations bill is not yet law, the five projects submitted for inclusion are:

- From Congressman Bill Foster, \$1,000,000 for electric paratransit buses for McHenry County
- From Congressman Jonathon Jackson, \$840,000 for transit signal priority on Western Avenue in southern Cook County
- From Congresswoman Delia Ramirez, \$840,000 for transit signal priority on Harlem Avenue in western Cook County
- From Congressman Brad Schneider, \$840,000 for transit signal priority on Washington Street in Lake County
- From Congresswoman Lauren Underwood, \$500,000 for an electric coach bus for I-55 express bus service in Will County

"We thank our congressional delegation for their support," said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger.

**"...THESE PROJECTS WILL IMPROVE TRANSIT SERVICE FOR THEIR CONSTITUENTS AND REDUCE POLLUTION IN OUR REGION. AS PACE WORKS TO CONVERT OUR ENTIRE FLEET TO ZERO-EMISSION BUSES BY 2040, EVERY ONE OF THESE GRANTS WILL HELP US IN THAT REGARD."**

As this report went to press, the bill was still awaiting consideration by the full House of Representatives as well as the U.S. Senate. The grants listed above are only proposed, pending action by those bodies and final White House approval.

## NEW VANGO SERVICES LAUNCHED IN PALATINE AND ITASCA

**On April 6, 2023, a new VanGo service launched, serving Harper College and other workplaces in Palatine and Schaumburg. For VanGo Palatine, a driver can pick up a vehicle from the Palatine Metra station and, for the low cost of \$5 per day, use the van to get to work within the zone.**

Then, on September 11, another new VanGo service launched, serving the Hamilton Lakes business parks in Itasca. The VanGo Itasca service offers two separate departure points—the Itasca Metra station and the Rosemont Blue Line CTA station. A VanGo driver can pick up a vehicle from either location and, for the low cost of \$5 per day, use the van to get to work within the Itasca zone.

That service launch comes on the heels of other Pace VanGo services already operating from the Lake-Cook Metra station in Deerfield and the Lake Forest

Metra station. Ridership continues to build on this unique service, which provides a transportation option for reverse commuters who may not need to go to a workplace every weekday but need a public transit option on days they go in-person to work.

VanGo is also now visible in the Transit trip planning app, so app users who aren't familiar with the service yet can see that it is an option as they plan their public transportation commute.







# PACE DEPLOYS MORE BUS TRACKER SIGNS

In this age with information at everyone's fingertips 24 hours a day, transit riders expect service data and updates in real time. And Pace continues to develop ways that can provide passengers up-to-the-minute information about our services.

In recent years, Pace has installed electronic signs at transit centers and shelters that display the arrival times of buses. We've added displays with text messaging codes at stops, providing a resource to riders who want immediate updates about bus arrivals and other travel information.

We continue to take significant steps to make timely information available to riders. Pace expended nearly \$700,000 in capital funding in 2023 to install 16 more bus tracker signs at sheltered bus stops. Across Northeastern Illinois, 197 total Pace bus tracker signs have been installed.

Bus tracker signs equip our riders with data about upcoming bus arrivals and provide them with instant communication about important updates, such as detour alerts or service changes.

In the coming years, Pace plans to install additional bus tracker signs at highly traveled locations, and we will continue to improve the accuracy of information delivered to our riders.

## STATE FUNDING LEADS TO MANY TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES BENEFITING RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES

**Thanks to Illinois' *Rebuild Illinois* capital program, Pace is strengthening investments in different technological upgrades that can improve service delivery and provide customers with more and better data.**

In February 2023, Pace upgraded our paratransit dispatching software (Trapeze) to ensure paratransit trips are grouped more effectively and efficiently. This technological improvement was crucial. Paratransit ridership grew and now exceeds pre-pandemic (2019) levels, but the contracted workforce who provide paratransit trips still hasn't grown accordingly. This challenge requires Pace to efficiently group trips into a single vehicle and ensure routing is as direct as possible. And our technological upgrades have helped address this challenge.

Recent technological advances are being adopted in droves by Pace Paratransit riders. For instance, customers can now pay for ADA Paratransit rides with Ventra, and the usage of that more convenient fare payment option is up 28% in late 2023, compared to the same six-month period in 2022.

Similarly, the use of TripCheck by ADA Paratransit riders continues to grow as well. TripCheck is a self-service tool that enables riders to check the status of their ride or upcoming trip reservations without having to call and wait for a live telephone operator. The use of TripCheck by email is up 24% in 2023. The use of TripCheck by text messaging is also up 24% this year. Likewise, usage of the automated phone service is up 14% over last year. These increases prove that customers will take advantage of a service that is easier and faster to use. More technological advancements like these will be introduced in the coming years.

Pace is deploying 20 more departure boards at high-traffic locations. Like fixed-route passengers who use the digital information screens at many of Pace's transit centers and bus stop shelters, paratransit customers now have easier access to real-time arrival information. One screen showing ADA Paratransit



pickup statuses is already on display at Lighthouse for the Blind in Chicago. Other future improvements would allow building lobby agents to communicate imminent arrival information to waiting riders.

As of December 2022, UZURV is providing some Pace paratransit trips to enhance overall capacity on Pace's demand-response service. Ridership on the UZURV service increased from less than 3,000 per month at the beginning of 2023 to almost 6,000 per month by fall 2023. The contract with UZURV has helped increase service capacity throughout the region, address operator shortages, and accommodate projected ridership growth.

In 2023, our partners at the Transit app have included information about Pace's On Demand service and, in 2024, will begin showing information about ADA paratransit service options. Paratransit riders will also soon see all the benefits of TripCheck in a mobile app. TripCheck enables ADA paratransit customers to review an itinerary, cancel trips, and receive alerts about a vehicle's arrival.



# WORK BEGINS TO EXPAND NORTHWEST TRANSPORTATION CENTER IN SCHAUMBURG



## USING FUNDING FROM THE REBUILD ILLINOIS PLAN, PACE IS CREATING A NEW PARATRANSIT TRANSFER FACILITY AT OUR NORTHWEST TRANSPORTATION CENTER NEAR WOODFIELD MALL IN SCHAUMBURG.

A groundbreaking event on July 19, 2023, included members of the Illinois General Assembly alongside Pace executives as they celebrated the beginning of construction at this site. The project will transform a critical hub for paratransit with new assets that promote accessibility, expand capacity, and enhance comfort and aesthetics for people with disabilities and other commuters.

The improvements to the site include the demolition of the former Schaumburg Post Office and the renovation of Pace’s existing facility that will accommodate customers, for the first time, with indoor waiting area and public restrooms. The concept was informed by feedback from Pace’s ADA Advisory Committees and reinforces the agency’s commitment to advancing the accessibility and equity of its service, a key aspiration of its strategic plan.

Pace Chairman Rick Kwasneski opened the celebration by welcoming guests with a special acknowledgement of Illinois State Representative Michelle Mussman, in whose district the transit center sits. “I want to thank Representative Mussman for her support as she voted for the Rebuild Illinois capital bill that is funding this project,” he said. “Thanks to that support, Pace

can invest in transit infrastructure in the northwest suburbs to improve access for those we serve.”

Pace Director and Hoffman Estates Mayor Bill McLeod introduced the esteemed line up of speakers, including Representative Michelle Mussman, Representative Mary Beth Canty, Representative Nabeela Syed, Schaumburg Trustee Jaime Clar, Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger, and Pace Suburban ADA Advisory Committee Chairperson Jemal Powell. Also in attendance were Pace directors David Guerin, Mayor of River Grove, and Chris Canning, former President of the Village of Wilmette.

Before introducing Powell, Metzger said, “I could not think of a better way to celebrate Disability Pride month than with a groundbreaking for the construction of a new fully accessible ADA Paratransit Transfer Facility.” She noted Pace’s efforts to enhance ADA Paratransit Service throughout the region by leveraging technology to improve the passenger experience. Powell serves as Chairperson of Pace’s Suburban ADA Advisory Committee, and he also serves on Pace’s Citizen’s Advisory Board. “Jemal is a regular rider of our fixed route system and advocates for the disability community. He is a big supporter of Pace and always provides us with valuable input to ensure we meet the mobility needs of our riders,” Metzger said.

“I use Pace every day, just about, on the fixed route side. I’ve been across the area on different routes and at different facilities, and this sounds like a very innovative facility,” said Powell. “Transit is

very important for everybody, across the board. People need to get to work, people have to go to school, people have to go shopping and visit loved ones. Thanks to Pace for being one of the most innovative transit agencies across the country.”

The Pace Northwest Transportation Center is a major hub with over 1,000 daily boardings for Pace service, including I-90 Express buses which utilize the Illinois Tollway I-90 Flex Lanes to bypass congestion and connect commuters to the CTA Blue Line at Rosemont. The new transit center and ADA Transfer Facility will include two new dual-port car charging stations, with capacity for four electric cars, an expanded drop-off area, and new Pace branded signs. New sidewalks will provide pedestrian access from Mall Drive and Kimberly Drive to the bus terminal, and parking capacity will increase from 192 spaces (6 ADA) to 301 spaces (8 ADA) to support the popular I-90 Express services. Other improvements include landscaping and site furnishings, seating, a Ventra vending machine, and digital and audio bus arrival information. The expanded and renovated facility will also include an indoor waiting area and passenger restrooms.

# CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY AT A "SOUTH CAMPUS" IN MARKHAM

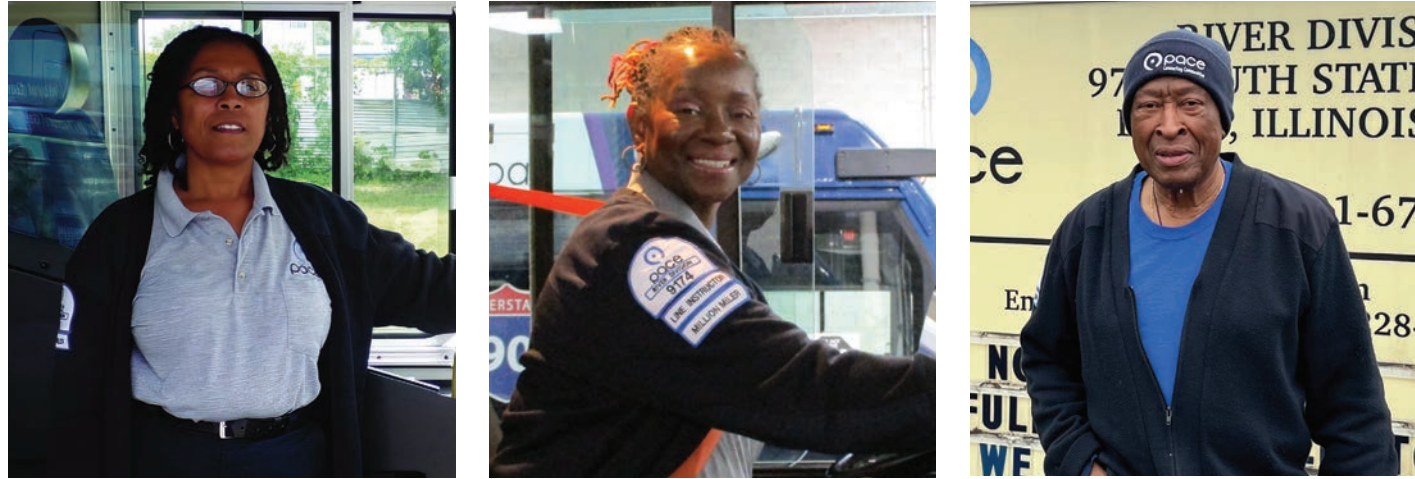


Pace has been constructing two additional buildings next door to our South Division in Markham that will help form a new campus for the south suburbs. The area will soon feature a Bus Acceptance Facility, where newly purchased buses are delivered and tested on a track, and will also include a new office building that will house our Customer Relations department.

In 2016, Pace opened our first compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station at this South Division facility in Markham, continuing Pace’s longstanding commitment to reduce our carbon footprint and our operating expenses. Pace now has 108 CNG-powered buses operating from South Division, which serves riders across southern Cook County.

Construction on the campus progressed throughout the year. The two buildings are expected to be ready for occupancy by February 2024.





# PACE CELEBRATES NEW CLASS OF SAFE BUS DRIVERS

A total of 22 dedicated Pace employees were inducted into the Million Miler club in 2023. Membership in that club requires a Pace bus driver to drive for 12.5 consecutive years without a preventable accident. Their conscientious driving habits not only keep our riders safe, but also benefits Pace’s bottom line and ensures our good stewardship of taxpayer resources.

Three of those Pace bus operators achieved an even more impressive distinction in 2023 by earning Two Million Miler status. Bernice Charles of South Division (Markham), Ben Jackson of River Division (Elgin), and Wanda Marshall (also of River Division) have each driven 25 consecutive years without a preventable accident. Their combined record of safe driving is equivalent to driving a Pace

bus to the moon—and back—twelve times! NASA would be proud to have astronauts with safety records as exemplary as those of Bernice, Ben, and Wanda.

At Pace’s December 2023 board meeting, the Board celebrated this year’s class of Million Miler inductees. Their dedication is amazing!

## 52-YEAR VETERAN ISADORE THIGPEN RETIRES WITH EXEMPLARY SAFETY RECORD

In 2023, Pace saw one of its longest-serving employees in agency history retire. Full Time Bus Operator Isadore Thigpen began his career in public transportation on March 8, 1971 with South Suburban Safeway Bus Line (a predecessor of Pace). His career ended in April after 52 years of tireless, quality service to Pace’s riders.

Mr. Thigpen also exemplified himself as having an amazing safety record. He became a Million Miler in 1994, then achieved Two Million Miler status in 2006, and then outdid himself by becoming a Three Million Miler in 2018. Earning that status requires 37.5 consecutive years of driving a bus without a preventable accident. What a remarkable accomplishment!

Among Thigpen’s additional accolades were an award for Outstanding Performance in the 1986 Bus Rodeo, Employee of the Month for February 1990, participation in a shuttle for President



Bill Clinton in 1995, and was named South Division’s “Pacesetter” in 2015. He was also promoted to Line Instructor in 1997.

“While I am happy for Isadore on his well-earned retirement, I’m sure I speak for the riders on the routes he operated as well as for the family of Pace staff at South Division when I say that I am very sad to see him go,” said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger. “He was a tremendous asset to Pace and inspired all of us with his dedication and customer service.”

The entire Pace family wishes Isadore a happy and healthy retirement.

### PACE ALSO OFFERS GRATITUDE AND BEST WISHES TO THESE OTHER LONG-TIME EMPLOYEES WHO RETIRED IN 2023:

**BRIAN FINDLAY**  
Heritage Division,  
43 years

**JOHN STRACHAN**  
North Division,  
33 years

**JOLANTA IRZYK**  
Budget Department,  
27 years

**MARION ROGlich**  
Human Resources  
Department, 23 years

**CHRISTOPHER FARDOUX**  
North Division,  
41 years

**HERBERT WATSON**  
South Division,  
33 years

**ROOSEVELT JACKSON**  
Passenger Facilities  
Department, 27 years

**CYNTHIA FOSTER**  
South Division,  
22 years

**LARRY KITSCH**  
Northwest Division,  
36 years

**JANET RAILA**  
South Holland Division,  
32 years

**RANDAL COMSTOCK**  
Vanpool Department,  
25 years

**NORBERTO RAMOS**  
Fox Valley Division,  
22 years

**RICHARD POPE**  
Fox Valley Division,  
35 years

**MARGARET MURRY**  
Heritage Division,  
32 years

**GABRIEL TAYLOR**  
West Division,  
25 years

**JOHN HARRIS**  
West Division,  
22 years

**DAVID RAILA**  
South Holland Division,  
35 years

**RONALD GERENCHER**  
Heritage Division,  
30 years

**MARIE TAYLOR**  
West Division,  
25 years

**JOHN SOCHA**  
South Holland Division,  
21 years

**MICHAEL ABENE**  
Graphics Department,  
34 years

**JULIUS PHILLIPS**  
West Division,  
29 years

**DEBORAH BROOKS**  
South Division,  
23 years





## PACE RIDERS OFFER HIGH MARKS IN LATEST CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

After compiling results of a customer satisfaction survey in late 2022, Pace staff in 2023 put the new data to use to better communicate with customers as well as modify several services to better meet customer needs.

Every few years, Pace and our fellow northeastern Illinois transit agencies conduct these surveys to understand customer perceptions of quality of service. The results from this study help to evaluate performance and inform future service adjustments. CTA and Metra conducted comparable studies to measure similar aspects of service with the same scale and to gain an understanding of satisfaction with transit service in the six-county RTA service region.

The survey began with asking respondents a selection of travel behavior questions, including questions about how many days a week, what days of the week, and what times they usually

ride Pace. These questions allow for a better understanding of customer satisfaction among various segments of riders and can also provide a better understanding of how and why respondents are using Pace. The travel behavior section also included questions about fare, including if respondents pay full or reduced fare and whether they have a Ventra card or not. The survey then asks respondents to rank their satisfaction with a series of satisfaction questions or attributes on a 10-point scale with 1 being "Very Unsatisfied" and 10 being "Very Satisfied." In addition to assessing overall satisfaction with Pace, the survey measured a set of thirty-seven attributes that explored various aspects of rider experience.

The results from these analyses indicate that a vast majority of customers (83%) are satisfied with Pace's service overall, very similar to previous years 2016 and 2013. This year saw a similar percentage of respondents indicating that they were likely to continue riding Pace buses in the next year and were likely to recommend Pace to others despite challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, overall satisfaction with Pace decreased or remained the same for most Pace divisions. Taken together, these results confirm that Pace is meeting the needs of its customers and that Pace customers are overall satisfied with the services that Pace provides to them.

## INTERAGENCY COORDINATION LEADS TO BENEFITS FOR RIDERS



Throughout the year, Pace and its sister agencies coordinated service, fares, and promotional efforts to streamline operations and ensure an optimal customer experience. In February 2023, Pace and CTA introduced several new shared passes and reduced the prices of other shared passes within our longstanding coordinated fare payment system. This year's new fare products included the Regional Connect Pass, with which a customer can take unlimited rides on Pace, CTA, and Metra for a flat rate for 30 days, and the shared Pace/CTA 1-Day (\$5), and 3-Day (\$15) passes. Other Pace/CTA shared products had price reductions this year: the 7-Day (\$20) and 30-Day (\$75) passes.

Additionally, in the second half of 2023, Pace joined CTA in providing free fares to riders of connecting bus routes in west Cook County during the rebuild of CTA's Forest Park Branch Blue Line. Because portions of the Blue Line on the west side were temporarily closed over periods of time in 2023, riders who normally took that line were encouraged to use other nearby lines. Pace and CTA notified riders of the suggested detour options and offered free rides to

those boarding in the affected area. The Forest Park Branch Rebuild is a multi-year, multi-phased investment to make service along the Blue Line's Forest Park Branch faster, safer, more reliable, and accessible for riders by making stations ADA-compliant and upgrading the tracks and other infrastructure.

Regarding bus service, Pace and CTA completed a joint planning effort on the South Halsted rapid transit initiative, which led to Pace's forthcoming Pulse Halsted Line and future signal priority deployment on Halsted to be used by both agencies' buses. Pace also enacted agreements with both CTA and Metra to host VanGo vehicles at their respective stations, so reverse commuters could take a train to a VanGo ride and reach a suburban job site.

Procurement coordination also occurs where and when it saves taxpayer money. All Pace's contracts allow our sister agencies to "piggyback" if they choose to do so. Pace alone has piggybacked on 17 current contracts worth \$78 million.



# AWARDS AND HONORS

Pace leaders were humbled to have been recognized in many different ways in 2023. See a few highlights of the awards and honors our staff and organization received this year:



## FIRST PLACE 2023 ADWHEEL AWARD

In February, Pace won a First Place Award in the 2023 AdWheel Awards competition for communications and marketing for our “Gas Prices” campaign in the category of Best Marketing and Communications to Support Ridership - Comprehensive Campaign.



## CMAP REGIONAL RESILIENCE AWARD

Pace won the Regional Resilience Award from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) for our Project Zero initiative. CMAP Executive Director Erin Aleman presented the award to Pace at the agency’s April 2023 Board of Directors meeting. Pace was honored to be recognized as a CMAP 2023 Regional Excellence Awards program winner.



Project Zero is Pace’s commitment to operating a zero-emission fleet by 2040. “Project Zero was a major step forward that we all took together,” said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger. She also noted that “Pace’s North Division in Waukegan will be the first garage to be converted to a fully electric fleet. The decision was based on environmental concerns and our ongoing work to create an innovative, equitable, and efficient transportation network for those we serve. Electrification will make an impact in the Waukegan area, where a high percentage of riders are low-income, minorities, or from otherwise underserved groups.”

Project Zero began with the delivery of Pace’s first electric bus in fall 2022 and the completion of the agency’s fleet transition plan. Twenty more buses are scheduled for delivery as Pace develops its facility transition plan and begins work on a network revitalization plan.



## APTA 2023 BUS SAFETY GOLD AWARD

Pace Suburban Bus also was named the winner of the American Public Transportation Association’s (APTA) 2023 Bus Safety Gold Award for a transit agency with more than 4 million and fewer than 20 million passenger trips annually.

The award is APTA’s top honor and recognizes a transit organization for the nation’s best example of innovative and proactive safety and security programs. The award presentation happened April 25 at the 2023 APTA Mobility Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

“Every day our industry works closely together to provide transportation to all Americans. A major part of that effort is addressing security and safety advancements and sharing best practices with systems across the country,” said APTA President and CEO Paul P. Skoutelas. “I want to congratulate the public transit agencies being honored for their safety and security contributions to the industry. Their work will guide the continued growth and advancement of public transit, making it safer for their passengers, employees, and communities nationwide.”

## TRF PRESIDENT’S AWARD

On April 28, Executive Director Melinda Metzger also was presented with Transportation Research Forum’s (TRF) President’s Award.

TRF President Joseph Schwieterman said, “Through Melinda’s leadership, Pace, a major transit provider in the Chicago region, is attracting national attention for its successful bus-on-shoulder program, expanding rapid transit offerings and high-quality service to essential workers. Join us as we congratulate Melinda and the entire Pace team for their commitment to excellence and innovation.”



**“EVERY DAY OUR INDUSTRY WORKS CLOSELY TOGETHER TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION TO ALL AMERICANS.”**

**Paul P. Skoutelas**  
APTA President and CEO



## PRSA RENAISSANCE AWARD

In January 2023, Pace’s ADA Paratransit campaign earned a PRSA Renaissance Award, which recognizes the top PR campaigns developed in the Pittsburgh region, where Pace’s advertising agency is based. Pace was thrilled to see our combined efforts recognized in the “integrated marketing campaign” category.

## GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE PROJECT AWARD

On September 19, 2023, the Center for Digital Government presented Pace with their 2023 Government Experience Project Award for Pace’s new online Feedback Center. This portal offers a 24/7 opportunity for customers to provide questions, comments, complaints, and commendations to Pace, with the information stored directly in the database of incoming customer tickets. While Pace still manually manages incoming phone calls and emails and inputs that information into our database during normal business hours, the new portal enables customers to provide us their information at their convenience while removing the data entry task from Pace staff’s workload.





# PACE LENDS "ROSA PARKS BUS" TO DUSABLE MUSEUM FOR KING HOLIDAY



**IT DID JUST THAT — IT WAS AMAZING TO HEAR KIDS DISCUSSING THE HISTORY OF TRANSPORTATION, SEGREGATION, AND CIVIL RIGHTS ABOUT OUR FLEET'S OLDEST VEHICLE."**

**Lorri Newson**

Pace Chief Financial Officer  
Chief Diversity, Equity, Inclusion,  
and Accessibility Officer

"We hoped this contribution to a remarkable museum experience would spark reflection and conversation," said Lorri Newson, Pace's Chief Financial Officer and Chief Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Officer. "It did just that—it was amazing to hear kids discussing the history of transportation, segregation, and civil rights about our fleet's oldest vehicle."

Prior to Rosa Parks' refusal to relinquish her seat on a crowded Montgomery bus to a white passenger, many bus systems maintained segregated facilities and discriminatory policies. The subsequent Montgomery Bus Boycott propelled Parks into the national limelight, elevated the profile of young Dr. King, and resulted in a Supreme Court ruling that rendered discrimination on transit illegal. Each year, Pace honors Parks by reserving the front seat on each bus on the anniversary of her arrest.

"Outside the museum, families could sit at the front of our bus and honor Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and all those who have joined in the fight for equality and justice," said Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger. "Every day, Pace strives to follow Dr. King's example and to build a more equitable transit system and a more just region. We're grateful for the DuSable Museum's role as leaders in educating our city about this important part of our past and present."

Pace also partnered with the DuSable Museum on their other programming throughout February in honor of Black History Month.



**What is the significance of this bus?**

Rosa Parks sat in a seat at the front of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 1, 1955, and changed the American history. Her brave protest and the boycott (led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) of Montgomery's bus system that ended the segregation of public transit in our country and sparked the larger civil rights movement.

Every year, Pace honors Rosa Parks for her refusal to give up a seat for her at the front of each one of our buses.

The bus on which Ms. Parks rode was a 1949 GMC (shown below)—the same model as the one you are on. This bus was used by the West Towns Bus Company, providing public transit service in the near-west Chicago suburbs. Pace now operates bus service in the area after acquiring West Towns (and other local bus companies) in 1984.





# IN MEMORIAM



We honor here the lives of those former Pace employees whom we lost in 2023, while fondly remembering the times we shared with them and the service they gave to northeastern Illinois public transit riders.

**ELDEN ADAMS**

**KENNETH E. HALL**

**LEROY PLIER**

**BELINDA BARNES**

**ANDREW HENDERSON**

**RICHARD PULLIA**

**ALPHONSO BETTS**

**CLENTON HENDRICKS**

**RONALD RAJSKI**

**JOY CALLAHAN**

**HENRY “HANK” JOZWIAK**  
UNION PRESIDENT, ATU LOCAL 1028

**OZELL SCREEN**

**BYRON CLARK**

**RANDY LARSON**

**ROBERT SETTEFRATI**

**PHILIP COUSINEAU**

**RICHARD “DICK” MAAS**  
UNION STEWARD, ATU LOCAL 241

**DARREN STRINGFELLOW**

**EILEEN DREBENSTEDT**

**ARTHUR NAPOLILLO**

**CHARLES THOMAS**

**ROY GOWDY**

**MARY NESMITH**

**LONNELL THURMOND**

**STEPHEN GRANDBERRY**

# COMMENDATIONS FROM RIDERS

In 2023, Pace was pleased to receive more than 3,000 commendations that riders submitted by phone, email, or the new self-service Feedback Center. See a few samples of exemplary customer service from the year:



I just wanted to commend Whitney on Route 626 northbound. She is so sweet taking the time to brighten my day after hearing I was stressed trying to transfer to her route from CTA delays this morning. I appreciate Pace employing people who are concerned for their riders and the route. Please let Whitney know that she is an asset to Pace and bringing kindness and community back to life after so much has been lost in these hard times is very much appreciated. Thanks so much Whitney!”



I am amazed at how well Pace was able to re-load TAP cards with rides bought previous to the pandemic and how they were able to convert the \$3 charge to a \$2 charge resulting in more rides than I previously purchased. I also like the new updated website explaining TAP and the link for accessing TAP accounts. Everyone involved in the transition and the TAP program in general should be commended for providing such a great service.”



Today I rode bus 6393 with bus driver 7424 and it was an exceptional experience. The bus driver was so pleasant and welcoming to every rider. If all bus drivers were as nice as she is, people would be riding the bus just for a social outing!”



The driver was sweet and personable. She took time to explain that I could phone RTA any time I needed assistance. She reminded me that things will get better and wished me a good day as I made my way off her bus. As a first-time rider on Pace and first-time public transit rider, BOTH of these individuals were stellar and treated me with the utmost respect and care. Pace is very fortunate to have both of these people working and operating their buses. They showed this rider that I was safe and that they cared that I got to my destination. If at all possible, please share my gratitude with these drivers and remind them that they in fact make a difference in the lives of many people each day. To them, they may have just been doing their job; to me, they made me feel seen, safe, and comfortable while on board their bus. Thank you, drivers! You’re doing a fantastic job!!”



My driver on Route 331 today was excellent! This is the safest I’ve ever felt on a Pace trip. The driver assured me she would get me to my drop off location safely, and in a timely manner. The driver was just marvelous and so professional!”



The driver was extremely helpful in answering questions about stops and pickup.”



I am visually impaired and have been using Pace Route 331 for 20 years to commute from the Brookfield Metra Station to my job at the Hines VA. This morning, I dropped my Ventra card near the curb, which I could not see well enough to find. The driver helped me find it. This might sound trivial, but being visually impaired and in a situation like that could have left me feeling helpless and embarrassed. This driver showed genuine empathy and a desire to help others that made me feel like a truly valued customer. He should be recognized and rewarded for that so other Pace drivers might be inspired to embrace the same attitude.”



I wanted to give thanks to the young man who drives Route 549. He was very patient with me and even offered me assistance. This was very thoughtful since I have a difficult time walking due to my age. While I was able to manage on my own, the thought of this gesture was very appreciated. I applaud Pace for having a wonderful driver!! Thank you.”



I take Pace Rt 755, leaving from Plainfield at 7:15am. I would like to share a very positive experience I had with one of your drivers, Tonette. On July 5, I fell asleep on the bus and reached Union Station instead of getting off at my stop - Harrison & Paulina. I had no clue how to get back as this had never happened before in the 12+ years I’ve been taking Pace! Even though Tonette didn’t know either, she took extra trouble to find out how I can get back to my stop. Finally, we figured out which CTA bus I should take. Not only that, when she saw me this morning, she remembered and asked if everything worked out ok. She is not only a very good driver, always pleasant & polite but truly cares for the passengers.”



I haven’t yet ridden the Pulse bus on Dempster, but I would like you to know that I appreciate the effort that has brought the service to us. It seems to have involved a very thoughtful process that has led to a smart solution. Looking forward to riding Pulse!”





PaceBus.com