

SOAR Testimony at CTA Budget Hearing Monday, November 7, 2011



Good evening. My name is Gail Spreen, I am Past President of SOAR, the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents, Chair of SOAR's Real Estate Review Committee and SOAR liaison to the Greater North Michigan Avenue Association. I am pleased to come before you today to speak, on behalf of SOAR, in support of public transportation in the Streeterville neighborhood.

Public transportation is a key component in Streeterville living. A large section of our residents no longer own vehicles and rely on getting around the City by public transportation. Without an El stop in the Streeterville neighborhood, the bus system is our main form of transport. We fully support the expansion of other forms of public transportation that may be in future planning efforts. Providing improved connections from the train stations and Loop to the growing Streeterville neighborhood helps encourage even more residents and employees of the area to use this form of transportation. Providing greater predictability to bus schedules and timing, such as Bus Tracker, also helps residents to be able to plan and use public transportation more in their everyday busy lives.

With South Streeterville only 1/2 developed at this time, there is significant growth potential that will be experienced in the next decade and thus an increased need to be proactive early on for transportation considerations. We ask that our service be continued and hopefully expanded in the future. In addition to the needs of the residents of the Streeterville community, the medical institutions are experiencing much growth as well and they also are active users of public transportation. As the institutional base grows even further, the encouragement and even requirement of employees using public transportation may come into play.

SOAR would like to thank the CTA for some of the innovations that have developed the past few years that make riding the bus more predictable and easier to use. The bus tracking system has been a great feature and we look forward to having that incorporated into the bus stops for even great visibility and use. SOAR has appreciated good communication and responsiveness from Joe Iacobucci and Ryan Mouw of the CTA for working on specific issues that have risen due to coordination between bus pass timing, routes and train schedules. It has been a good relationship in which we look forward to continuing. SOAR also appreciates being a conduit to the residents in helping to market the new features that the CTA is making available to make the public transportation experience a more positive one and easy to use.

In our goal to make Streeterville the 'Greenest Neighborhood' in Chicago, we continue to encourage the development of 'friendly' express buses moving visitors from the train stations to Navy Pier and from the neighborhood to McCormick Place. We look forward to working with the CTA to advance future planning to include clean running buses and more people walking, biking and riding public transportation.

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Working to Keep Streeterville a Neighborhood