



# Office of the City Clerk

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## Legislation Text

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File #: R2014-706, Version: 1

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Committee on Transportation and the Public Way  
City Council Meeting October 8,  
2014

### RESOLUTION

#### **A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CROSSRAIL CHICAGO AND PREMIUM EXPRESS TRAIN SERVICE BETWEEN O'HARE AIRPORT AND McCORMICK PLACE**

WHEREAS, Chicago is the financial, business and culture capital of the Midwest, bringing in millions of tourists and visitors every year; and

WHEREAS, improved and expanded passenger train service is essential to maintain Chicago's economic vitality and allow for increased growth and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, a new initiative for first-class passenger rail service called CrossRail Chicago has emerged which would, for the first time, connect Metra route lines together, knitting together the Chicagoland region; and

WHEREAS, Chicago residents of high unemployment areas do not have easy transportation access to areas with job surplus, such as between the south side and the area around O'Hare Airport; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Department of Transportation has been diligently working for months on creating the city's only through-station for Metra and Amtrak trains at Union Station, developing plans to use two existing tracks along the river that travel through the station, allowing for connected northbound and southbound service; and

WHEREAS, if connecting ramps were built and tracks rights were secured from the freight railroad owners, an elevated freight line along 16<sup>th</sup> Street from the Lakefront to Halsted (also known as the St. Charles Airline) could connect South Side Metra Electric and Rock Island Metra trains with Union Station and northbound Metra routes allowing for crosstown Metra and Amtrak service for the first time; and

WHEREAS, Metra currently serves O'Hare Airport along the North Central Line from Union Station to the O'Hare Transfer Station on the far eastern part of the airport; these tracks are owned by Metra from Union Station to Franklin Park and then owned by the Canadian National Railroad for the final three miles to the airport; and

WHEREAS, Metra service to O'Hare is less than once an hour during the week and not at all on weekends; passengers must take a shuttle bus from the O'Hare Transfer Station to the end of the people-mover to access the terminals, making service uncompetitive; and

WHEREAS, the CTA Blue Line currently serves O'Hare Airport but express trains are not feasible, given the

limited capacity of the tunnels; and

WHEREAS, a Department of Aviation blue ribbon study in the last year of the Daley Administration considered whether a privately financed express train could be built along CTA right-of-way, recognizing the high unmet demand for premium train service from O'Hare and that our competitor cities around the world offer premium train service from their airports to their downtowns, but capacity constraints in the tunnels make such express service unfeasible; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Department of Aviation is extending the people-mover all the way to the edge of the Metra O'Hare Transfer Station as part of a new consolidated rental car facility directly adjacent to the Metra O'Hare Transfer State, allowing for the first time in the history of O'Hare Airport convenient access to the terminals for Metra passengers; and

WHEREAS, current plans for the Department of Aviation's consolidated rental car facility, however, do not include a multi-modal train station as part of the O'Hare Transfer Station to take advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to connect Metra passengers with the jobs and flights of O'Hare and instead only construct a parking lot; and

WHEREAS, Chicago is currently undergoing a nationwide search for the next Commissioner of the Department of Aviation who will have the opportunity to create a new direction, making the timing excellent for a study of premium Metra/Amtrak service from O'Hare to Union Station and McCormick Place; and

WHEREAS, London's Heathrow Express premium train service could serve as a model for Chicago as the premium trade operator is a profitable enterprise wholly owned by Heathrow Airport that runs an express train every 15 minutes along tracks owned by another public agency for a price between \$34 and \$45; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Aviation is one of the country's most innovative contracting public agencies, regularly procuring design-build-maintain-operate-finance contracts and many variations thereof, providing an opportunity to leverage the city's intellectual capital in innovative service delivery and concession models in procuring premium train service to the airport; and

WHEREAS, traffic congestion on the Kennedy and Dan Ryan Expressways is a permanent source of frustration and economic waste, with airport traffic a significant factor in increasing that congestion; increasing and improving train service can draw drivers and taxi passengers off the expressway, reducing traffic congestion and its corresponding high cost of wasted time from those who do drive and ; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak service from the entire Midwest to Chicago terminates in Union Station, but with the use of through tracks and a multi-modal train station built at O'Hare, Amtrak service could also serve O'Hare airport, diverting even more cars from our expressways and making O'Hare a more competitive airport; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Senate, Illinois House and Cook County Board of Commissioners have all passed resolutions in favor of CrossRail Chicago; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chicago City Council supports CrossRail Chicago and its inclusion in the region's capital plans including those of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Regional Transportation Authority and Metra; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chicago City Council urges the Chicago Department of Aviation to strongly consider building the consolidated rental car facility as a multi-modal train station directly connected to the Metra station and not just as a stand-alone parking lot in order to take full advantage of this new asset at O'Hare Airport and seek federal, state and transit funds if necessary to cover any incremental costs associated with building the rental car facility as a multi-modal train station; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chicago City Council urges the Chicago Infrastructure Trust to fully study innovative mechanisms to finance an O'Hare-McCormick Place premium express train service, including the necessary infrastructure upgrades that would permit South Side Metra direct service to O'Hare and share the findings of that study to the Chicago City Council by March 1, 2015; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Chicago City Council urges the Chicago Department of Aviation to consider conducting a Request for Information to global train operators and financiers on the feasibility of establishing premium airport express train service to McCormick Place running along Metra- and CN-owned tracks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chicago City Council calls on McCormick Place to study and consider their capacity and ability to upgrade their existing Metra station as part of a premium Metra service to O'Hare Airport as well as consider the extent to which premium O'Hare train service fits in with their strategic plan to attract convention business and share those findings with the Chicago City Council by March 1, 2015.