



Metra

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Metra is the Chicago area's multi award-winning commuter rail agency serving Cook, DuPage, Will, Lake, Kane and McHenry counties.

Background

**Metra's
Commuter
Rail Board
invites your
interest in
the position
of
Executive
Director**

Chicago has always stood as the railroad center of the nation. Reflecting this status as a major rail hub, many of the Chicago area railroads provided commuter passenger service in addition to their primary freight operations. However, this network of commuter lines linking the outlying suburbs with downtown Chicago, once profitable and highly valued by the railroads as an extension of their marketing of core freight services, eventually became threatened by continuing financial losses and decades of capital disinvestment and neglect.

In 1974, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) was created by the Illinois General Assembly to coordinate and assist public transportation throughout the six-county metropolitan region and to serve as a conduit for the state and federal subsidies needed to keep the system operational. Due to ongoing financial pressures, the RTA was subsequently reorganized by the Legislature in 1983 to provide for a service-board approach to the day-to-day operation of bus, rapid transit and commuter rail services systemwide. Under these changes to the RTA Act, the Commuter Rail Service Board emerged as the agency overseeing all commuter rail operations in the six-county area and was charged with a broad range of responsibilities with respect to fare and service levels, budgeting, capital programming, long-

range planning and strategic service expansion.

Perhaps one of the more significant steps taken by the Commuter Rail Service Board was the introduction in 1984 of the "Metra" name as the service mark for the commuter system. Given the Board's role as a dual-purpose organization responsible for systemwide oversight as well as direct operations, the adoption of the Metra logo was meant to bring a unifying identity to the various carrier components comprising the system. It was also intended to help establish and reinforce the Commuter Rail Service Board's commitment to safe, reliable and cost-efficient rail transportation.

Today, Metra directly operates seven of its lines and contracts with two freight carriers

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to run four others. Metra’s contracted services include the Burlington Northern Santa Fe line to Aurora, as well as the three Union Pacific lines: the UP North Line to Kenosha, Wisconsin; the UP Northwest Line to Harvard, with branch line service to McHenry; and the UP West Line to Elburn that was extended from its former terminus at Geneva in 2006.

These contracted services are operated by the UP and BNSF railroads pursuant to purchase of service agreements (PSAs) with Metra. Under these contracts, the carriers use their employees and own or control the rights-of-way and most of the other facilities required for operations. However, Metra owns the rolling stock and, in conjunction with the local municipalities, is responsible for most stations and other passenger amenities. While working cooperatively with its freight partners, the PSAs provide Metra with overall authority with respect to fare, service, and staffing levels.

Metra also has a financial assistance grant arrangement with the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), operator of the South Shore Line commuter service from South Bend, Indiana. The service shares the Metra Electric right-of-way from Kensington/115th Street to the Millennium Park station in downtown Chicago. Metra’s funding share under its agreement with NICTD is predicated on the proportion of service operated within the state of Illinois.

In the case of Metra’s direct operations, the services are actually provided through Metra’s operating arm, the Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation, or NIRC. The NIRC was formed in the early 1980s as a means by which to continue vital commuter rail services threatened by private carrier bankruptcy and line sales. The NIRC began actual operations in June 1981 when it assumed the commuter services of the bankrupt Rock Island Railroad. At that time, the NIRC’s operational and managerial authority with respect to the Rock Island was exercised essentially as an adjunct staff function within the RTA.

However, with the assumption of the former Milwaukee Road commuter lines the following year, as well as the consolidation of all RTA railroad responsibilities under the NIRC, a more fully developed organizational structure was required. Accordingly, on October 1, 1982, the NIRC was formally established as a separate rail operating subsidiary with broad responsibility for commuter rail operations on a regional or system-wide basis. The NIRC organization that emerged was eventually transferred to the then newly formed Commuter Rail Service Board as part of the general RTA restructuring completed in 1984.

Subsequently, the NIRC took over operation of the former Illinois Central Gulf electric lines acquired by Metra in 1987. In addition, the NIRC also operates the former GMO service to Joliet as Metra’s Heritage

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Corridor; the former Norfolk & Western line to Orland Park as Metra's SouthWest Service, a route that has since been extended to Manhattan; and Metra's newest line, the North Central Service, to Antioch near the Wisconsin border. The NIRC also handles all commuter passenger ticket sales at Chicago Union Station (including for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe commuter service) as a result of its acquisition of the former CUS Station Company in the late 1980s.

The employees engaged in these direct Metra operations are the NIRC's and it negotiates directly with them on all matters pertaining to wages, work rules, working conditions, and benefits. However, recognizing that good faith collective bargaining alone would not be sufficient to ensure overall organizational and operational success, the NIRC has worked hard over the years to foster a cooperative, productive relationship with its employees. The Metra Labor/Management Committee, in place since 1983, has played a critical role in this process and has helped bring labor and management together on the many areas of mutual interest and common concern.

Since its formation in 1984 - the outgrowth of a near total collapse of the region's public transportation system in the late 1970s and early 1980s - Metra has remained focused on its fundamental mission to preserve, modernize, and expand commuter rail service throughout the six-county area. Metra has consistently made the investments required to enhance system reliability, opera-

tional performance and cost efficiency. Committed to the twin objectives of core system maintenance/renewal and strategic service expansion, Metra has leveraged available capital resources so as to reduce overall operating costs and to grow the system to meet the ever-increasing demand for new and better rail service.

Over the past 25+ years, Metra has invested more than \$5 billion in improvements to the system, including new and/or rehabilitated rolling stock, renovated track and structures, modernized signal and communication systems, upgraded electrical systems and support facilities, and new stations and parking. In 2006, Metra completed expansion of its North Central Service as well as extensions of its UP West Line to Elburn and its SouthWest Service to Manhattan, with the projects finished on schedule and \$50 million under budget. Core capacity improvements are currently planned for Metra's UP West and UP Northwest lines. Also on the drawing board is Metra's new SouthEast Service and its suburb-to-suburb STAR line, plus major rolling stock acquisitions, station improvements and bridge and yard renewal projects.

In its history, Metra has accomplished much; in its future, there is much for Metra to do. Metra remains committed to working with all of its stakeholders in order to ensure funding for Metra to meet the transportation needs of the region now and as it moves further into the 21st century.



Issues and Opportunities

As Metra employees, at all levels, continue to provide outstanding and highly efficient commuter rail service, organizational morale has been severely undermined by the circumstances which lead to and the negative publicity surrounding the financial improprieties and sudden death of the last Executive Director.

Metra's next Executive Director will have the opportunity to assemble a new management team. Some senior level positions are now vacant and many excellent long-term staff members are approaching retirement age. The next Executive Director will need to be skilled in succession planning.

By state enabling statute, Metra's Executive Director position is provided with full executive authority to provide services and to manage the organization within general policy direction by the Board. In response to the financial indiscretions of the former Executive Director, the Board is reviewing its policies and installing some "checks and balance" features into the system among which are the establishment of both Executive and Financial Review committees of the Board and the creation of an Inspector General and a separate Counsel to work directly for the Board.

In addition to employee morale, public confidence in Metra has been damaged and both need to be restored.

Metra is largely supported by fare box and dedicated sales tax revenues both of which are down due to the recessed national economy. So far, Metra has remained in good financial condition. It needs to aggressively search for new revenues and operational efficiencies in order to maintain its award winning level and quality of service.

Metra is under federal mandate to provide costly grade separation at some intersections.



Job Requirements

Requirements: By statute the Executive Director is required be an "individual of proven transportation and management skills and may not be a member of the Commuter Rail Board." Must have extensive executive level management and leadership experience from an organization comparable in size and complexity to Metra. Included must be some transportation experience which preferably will include direct management or executive management oversight over a commuter rail or public transit system serving a large metropolitan area. Most critical are impeccable professional ethics, strong and proven management and leadership skills, financial management strength, strategic planning skills, excellent communications abilities and political sensitivity.

The following are among the characteristics that Board members expect in Metra's next Executive Director:

- Directly accountable to the Metra Board for ensuring that all actions taken are consistent with Board policies and direction, providing all reports that the Board might request and advising the Board when clearer policies and direction are needed,
- Open, honest and forthcoming style with strong writing and verbal skills,
- Understanding of public transit and creative in finding new revenue sources,
- Good business sense and fiscally responsible,
- Understanding of the urban/suburban nature of Metra's service area
- A self starter and a quick study,
- Enjoys community involvement and understands its marketing value for Metra,
- Listens,
- A strategic thinker and an active problem solver who is not locked into status quo and is able to make positive changes easily,
- Is self confident and secure with the ability to admit mistakes and accept criticism,
- Is a strong and independent person who is able to maintain focus and balance and to withstand strong pressure from a variety of interests,
- Is diplomatic.

Management & Leadership Style

With the Board of Directors

The Executive Director is expected to be open, transparent and forthcoming in communicating with the Board and to establish a strong team relationship with the Board.

Will provide the Board with comprehensive management information (including financial) on a continual basis and in a timely manner.

Has the ability to "read the Board" and each of its members well and to demonstrate insight and wisdom in developing policy options and recommendations.

Not a "vote counter"; non manipulative; has no hidden agendas and prevents unavoidable crises and surprises.

Will assist the Board to collaborate and build consensus around issues.

With Subordinates

Metra has had only one Executive Director and many staff members have been there since the beginning. They have high expectations for the next Executive Director and anticipate a boss whose style is participatory, empowering and who solicits and utilizes staff's best thoughts.

Leads, motivates, evaluates and holds staff accountable without intimidating, stifling creative thoughts or being over controlling

Able to assess staff capabilities and performance and willing to recognize and reward talent and eliminate non-performing employees.

External Relations

Views Metra as an active participant and partner with RTA, CTA and Pace in the Chicago area public transit community and not as simply a commuter rail agency.

Is personally accessible and encourages key staff to be accessible to and an active participants in key regional business, civic and community organizations.

Is proactive in advocating for Metra services, programs and issues with regional, state and federal policy making and funding agencies.

Establish and maintain cooperative relations with local, state and federal governments

Re-establish and maintain open, forthright and trusting relationships with the media.

To Apply

Please send a confidential resume and cover letter, with present salary, immediately but NLT September 10, 2010 to:

Robert E. Slavin, President

SLAVIN MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

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Website: www.slavinweb.com



Please visit the Metra website at www.metrarail.com

Compensation

Highly competitive pay and benefit package including interview and moving costs.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY RECRUITER/EMPLOYER





Metra

Organizational Chart

