

# Pace Updates in Cook County



OCTOBER 2023

## Fair Transit South Cook Offers More Service, Enhanced Job Access

Thanks to financial support from Cook County, Pace significantly expanded service on Route 352 Halsted. That service expansion led to more frequent buses on Pace's most heavily used route, and the improvement led to a corresponding ridership increase.

The project is yet another example of the results that can be achieved through interagency coordination, as this Pace route offers access to both CTA and Metra train lines.



## Innovative VanGo Service Launched

A recent innovation called VanGo has kicked off in Itasca, Palatine, Lake Forest, and Deerfield, and can be brought to other areas as needed. VanGo commuters reserve a Pace van for a day, for only \$5 per round trip. The customer unlocks the van with a code provided at the time of reservation and drives the van to/from work within a specified zone. This service was borne of a recognition that many workers don't go to an office every day, but do need a reliable public transportation option when they do commute. Vans can be picked up at Metra or CTA stations to make reverse commuting to office parks affordable and convenient for those with non-traditional schedules.



## Pace Connect Offers Late-Night Rides to Third Shift Workers Near O'Hare and Harvey



Pace Connect launched June 27, 2023, in two Cook County zones--one near O'Hare Airport and the other in Harvey and surrounding communities. Pace Connect allows a rider to book a ride at a moment's notice using a mobile app, with a low \$2 fare.

Pace Connect is an overnight service, designed to help third-shift workers reach jobs at times when local fixed route service isn't readily available. Pace Connect is made possible in part by grants from Cook County and the Regional Transportation Authority.

Pace Connect is open to the general public. Rides can be booked by the Pace Connect mobile app or by phone at 847-793-1151.

Since most riders will use Pace Connect after transferring from a fixed route service, they can use the Transit app to plan a trip that shows both service types. The Transit app works seamlessly with the Pace Connect app for purposes of booking trips.



847-364-PACE  
PaceBus.com

## New Pulse Rapid Transit Line Offers Frequent, Faster Service on Dempster

Pace launched daily service on our second rapid transit service—the Pulse Dempster Line—on October 29, 2023. This new line offers more frequent bus service, faster travel times, and enhanced stations, each with heated shelters and real time Bus Tracker signs. The Dempster Line follows the successful Pulse Milwaukee Line.

Building on that success, Pace is now developing our third and fourth rapid transit lines in the south suburbs—one on Halsted Street and the other on 95th Street.

Pulse service represents Pace’s long-term strategy to provide a fast, frequent service with high-quality amenities on corridors with heavy demand for transit service. Transit signal priority technology allows Pace buses to extend green lights and shorten red lights, keeping buses on schedule and shortening travel times for riders.



## Pace Investing in Markham with New Facilities

Pace is finalizing construction in 2023 of two new facilities in Markham—an office building to house our Customer Relations and Safety/Training Departments and an acceptance facility for taking delivery of and performing maintenance on new buses. The forthcoming delivery of zero-emission buses makes the new acceptance facility critical.

This facility is next door to South Division, which in 2016 became our first compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station. Pace now has 108 CNG-powered buses operating in the south suburbs as part of our longstanding commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and our operating expenses, while offering south siders the benefits of reduced pollution.

## Pace Commits to Zero-Emission Bus Fleet by 2040



Pace has been a leader in clean energy vehicles since our purchase of hybrid-electric para-transit buses in 2010 and compressed natural gas buses in 2016, and is now doing even more to combat climate change. Pace has announced a plan to convert the entire Pace bus fleet to zero-emission buses by 2040.

The first electric bus in our fleet will operate on Route 381 on 95th Street in Cook County. Our North Division (Waukegan) garage will be the first to fully convert to an electric fleet by 2026.

Pace has one electric bus already and has awarded a contract to buy 22 more, expected in early 2024. In 2023, we completed plans for both our fleet conversion and our facility conversions. While this project will be expensive, Pace continues to pursue federal grants to offset the cost.

## Community College Partnerships Help Pace Recruit Bus Drivers

In the face of a nationwide shortage of bus drivers, Pace has embarked upon an innovative collaboration with Olive-Harvey, South Suburban, Oakton, Triton, Harper, Moraine Valley, and Prairie State Colleges to recruit, train, and hire prospective bus operators.

Pace is now paying the tuition of students who enroll in CDL “B” Permit courses held at the schools. Pace also covers the cost of the DOT physical and drug screening.

The first class of Pace-sponsored students graduated in 2022 from Olive-Harvey and, since that time, Pace has duplicated this effort at other regional colleges, leading to hundreds of newly hired bus operators.





## New Northwest Division Bus Garage Coming to Wheeling

Pace's Northwest Division bus garage in Des Plaines is one of the busiest in the Pace system, with 125 buses operating 23 bus routes on a daily basis. Pace inherited this facility in 1991 and it is now too small to accommodate the growing Pace operation in northern Cook County.

Pace has purchased a large building on Wolf Road in Wheeling that will become the new home of Pace Northwest Division. It will fuel low- and zero-emission buses as well as the Vanpool program's administrative office and Pace's print shop.

## Pace Studying "Flex Lane" on I-294 (Tri-State)

Following the successful implementation of bus-on-shoulder operations on portions of I-55, I-90, and I-94, Pace has partnered with the Illinois Tollway and Regional Transportation Authority to evaluate options for Pace express bus operations on the I-294/I-90 corridor from Harvey to the O'Hare/Schaumburg area. Dubbed the *I-294 Tri-State Market & Facilities Feasibility Study*, the plan includes "Flex Lanes" (similar to those on I-90) to vastly improve job access and reduce travel times.



## Paratransit Transfer Facilities Under Construction in Schaumburg and Calumet City

Utilizing *Rebuild Illinois* funding, Pace is creating a new paratransit transfer facility at our Northwest Transportation Center, adjacent to Woodfield Mall in Schaumburg. The expansion and renovation of that facility will also include an indoor waiting area, passenger restrooms, new signage, and sidewalks providing pedestrian access from Mall Drive and Kimberly Drive to the bus terminal. This project also supports Pace's I-90 express bus service. Construction began in July 2023. A similar facility for paratransit riders is in development in Calumet City.

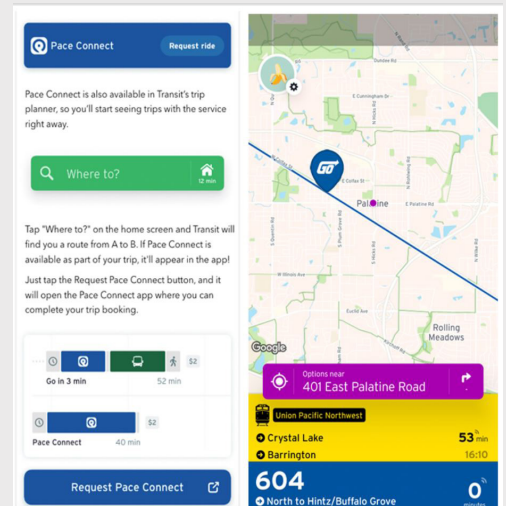


## Transit App Puts All Forms of Regional Public Transit at Your Fingertips

Pace launched its partnership with Transit in November 2022, and Transit is now Pace's recommended trip planning app. It offers features that no other app does—most importantly, showing Pace's flexible, reservation-based transit options in trip planning search results.

As of November 2023, the Transit app has even more value for Pace riders with the inclusion of On Demand service in addition to the previously included Pace Connect and VanGo services. Those reservation-based options offer transit options within defined zones at certain times of day. On Demand operates in ten suburban zones, is open to the general public, and costs \$2 per ride.

Transit's trip planner integrates these flexible options together with results that include Pace's bus network, CTA and Metra services, ride hailing, biking, walking and more to give you the best possible trip.





## Federal Grant Boosts Progress on New Transit Center in Harvey

Pace and Metra have begun a reconstruction of the transit center in Harvey, which already has the most bus boardings of any suburban location. Due in part to a recently awarded \$20 million federal RAISE grant, Pace's new Harvey Transportation Center will be reconstructed adjacent to the Metra train station. This multimodal facility will offer a significant upgrade for public transit riders in the south suburbs and is a partnership between Pace, Metra and the City of Harvey.



The improved Pace transit center benefits some of Illinois' most historically disadvantaged communities and thus meets the equity goals in the Biden Administration's Justice40 Initiative. The project reflects an intentionally inclusive economic investment through both the creation of new construction jobs and a new facility that will vastly improve the customer experience.

## Paratransit Ridership Soars

### *Technologies Offer New Benefits for Riders*

Ridership on public transit across the region continues to rebound as the pandemic eases, but one service mode is already back to 2019 ridership levels: ADA Paratransit. Riders with disabilities often have no other transportation option and are using Pace's quality service to access work, health care, shopping and school.

Pace has also implemented for riders with disabilities several new technologies in recent years—TripCheck (a self-service tool for managing upcoming trips), Ventra fare payment, and options to use ridehailing companies for convenient same-day reservations at a lower fare.

## New Low-Cost Ridehailing Option Coming for Riders with Disabilities

Pace's latest efforts to improve service and reduce costs for riders with disabilities began in late 2023 with the new Rideshare Access Program, which will offer riders certified for ADA Paratransit the option to use a ridehailing app to book a ride, with the rider paying \$2 and Pace subsidizing up to \$30 per trip.



## Riders with Disabilities to Ride Free on Pace Fixed Routes in 2024

Pace has proposed in our 2024 budget a free fare on Pace fixed route services for all riders certified for ADA Paratransit. While riders with disabilities already pay half price on Pace, Metra, and CTA fixed route services, this new fare policy further incentivizes a transit option with multiple benefits: convenience for riders who have last-minute plans and reduced expense for the taxpayer. This new fare policy builds on recent successes with lower pass prices and new shared products between Pace, CTA and Metra.



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