

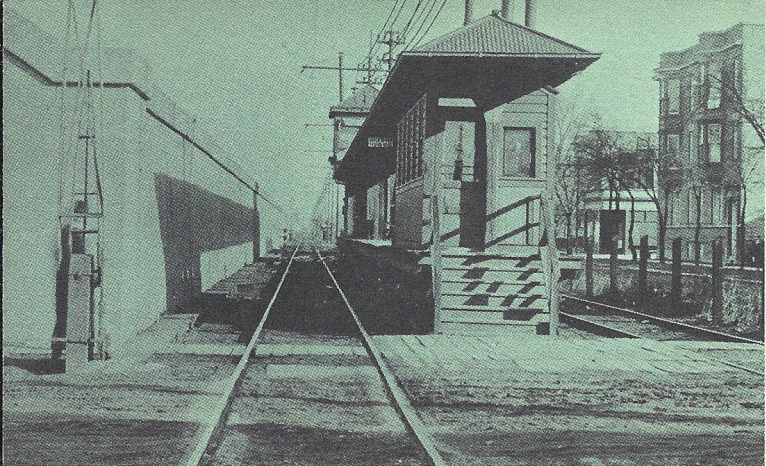
# ELEVATION OF LAKE STREET RAPID TRANSIT—a triumph for public agency cooperation; eliminates traffic hazards and delays of surface operation in Chicago-Oak Park



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**CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY**



Street-level tracks and the Austin Avenue station occupied this site for more than 63 years before the completion of the new tracks on the adjacent North Western elevated embankment. This picture, taken about 1912, shows the original Austin station. In those days the street intersection was unpaved, except for brick-paved or plank walkways.

This is an era of great progress in mass transportation in the Chicago area.

In less than a quarter of a century, Chicago has built its first subway system, consolidated its surface and rapid transit operations, pioneered the co-ordination of rail rapid transit with multi-lane expressways, and extensively modernized transit equipment facilities and services.

During this period of intensive improvements in transit, unmatched in the history of Chicago, a total of \$281,000,000 has been spent or obligated for improvements. This includes approximately \$175,000,000 in revenues of Chicago Transit Authority since its inception 19 years ago, \$102,600,000 (including federal aid for subways) spent by the City of Chicago, and \$3,400,000 provided principally by other local public agencies.

Latest of these substantial improvements is elevation of the street-level section of the Lake Street rapid transit route, a \$4,000,000 project jointly financed by the City of Chicago, the Village of Oak Park, Cook County, the State of Illinois and the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, and the Chicago Transit Authority.

The Lake Street elevation, like its predecessor, the Congress route in the median of the Congress Expressway, is not only of general benefit to the entire metropolitan area but is of special benefit to Chicago's West Side and the western suburbs.

## Important Public Benefits

In operation as of Sunday, October 28, 1962, the Lake Street elevation project is outstanding in important respects.

It establishes a precedent and a pattern for public agency co-operation in mass transportation projects in the future when widespread public benefits, including improvement in street traffic flow, may be obtained.

It eliminates 22 grade crossings in the two and a half mile stretch between Laramie Avenue, Chicago, and Harlem Avenue, Oak Park, where rapid transit trains have been operating at street-level since 1901.

Fourteen of the grade crossings were in Oak Park—at Harlem, Marion, Home, Clinton, Kenilworth, Oak Park, Euclid, East, Scoville, Elmwood (pedestrian crossing), Ridgeland, Harvey, Lombard and Humphrey; and eight were in Chicago—at Austin, Mayfield, Menard, Waller, Parkside, Central, Pine and Long.

Now the heavy volume of pedestrian and vehicular traffic can move through those intersections unimpeded by rapid transit operations. Formerly as many as 200,000 transit riders, pedestrians, and motorists were subjected to hazards and delays each weekday.

Another worthwhile advantage is that downtown Chicago is brought minutes closer for those riders who travel between the Loop and Chicago's West Side, Oak Park, and adjacent suburbs.

## More Improvements Planned

Important additional improvements for the Lake Street route are scheduled for the immediate future. Foremost from the riders' point of view undoubtedly is the purchase of "New Look" rapid transit cars of the latest design, featuring the most recent advances in rider comfort and high performance speed.

To finance the purchase of this equipment, replacing the cars now in use, Chicago Transit Authority has contracted to borrow \$7,500,000 from the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency to which it will add \$7,500,000 or more of its own funds. Specifications for bids on these new cars are now being prepared, and, in anticipation of their delivery, the elevated track and structure between Laramie Avenue and the Loop is being renovated.



Lake street trains were extended down the ramp from Laramie Avenue to street-level on April 15, 1899. This scene looking northeast shows both the North Western and elevated railway stations on ground level at Central Avenue. The picture was taken November 20, 1899.

Expenditure of more than \$3,500,000 is also contemplated for construction of a terminal yard, sub-station and shops in an area west of Harlem Avenue to be filled-in between the permanent crib wall and the North Western embankment.

Relocating Chicago Transit Authority's tracks introduces a concept new to local transit operations in Chicago. Never before have rapid transit trains shared a right-of-way with other than electrically operated passenger carriers. The influence of this modern trend is further emphasized in the construction features of the five new stations which serve the relocated section of the route.

## Attractive Stations of Modern Design

Four of the five stations, Central-Parkside, Austin-Mason, Oak Park-Euclid, and Marion-Harlem have double entrances. The fifth, Ridgeland, is a single end station. There are escalators at Central, Austin and Oak Park.

Each station is identified by color, as follows: Central-Parkside, yellow; Austin-Mason, grey; Ridgeland, light blue; Oak Park-Euclid, peach; Marion-Harlem, green. Island-type platforms at each of the stations are long enough to accommodate eight-car trains.

Construction of the station buildings, which are slightly above street-level, as well as the platforms, included the widening of the Harlem Avenue viaduct and raising the height of the retaining wall between Harlem Avenue and Marion Street. Integrated with the south wall of the North Western embankment, the new station buildings incorporate many design features.

Large picture windows enhance a light and bright interior. External walls are of ceramic glazed brick in the color code for the respective station. This color is repeated in porcelain enamel panels of each station front, in the

glazed ceramic tile of the interior walls, and in the porcelain enamel panels of the agents' booths.

Electric signs over the entrance of each station building are to identify the station and display the travel time between the station and Chicago's Loop.

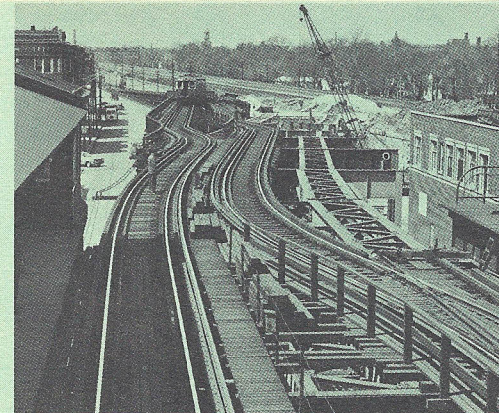
Passenger control facilities include agent-controlled, illuminated fare indicator turnstiles, coin-operated turnstiles, and electrically-operated, remotely-controlled exit turnstiles.

## Escalators at Central, Austin and Oak Park

The escalators at Central, Austin and Oak Park are of the reversible, dual operation type. Normally in rush hours the escalators will operate in the direction of the prevailing flow of traffic, but in the off-peak hours the escalators will operate automatically.

When on automatic operation, the escalator is activated by treadle steps, at the top and at the bottom. Once

This view, looking west from Laramie Avenue station, shows a section of the new permanent steel structure which connects with tracks on the North Western railway embankment, seen in the background, and becomes the permanent westbound track on the newly elevated right-of-way.



an escalator has been set in motion by a passenger it will operate in the proper direction until the passenger has alighted. Flashing signs warn patrons not to board an escalator operating in the wrong direction. Both escalators and stairs have glass-walled shelters at the platform level.

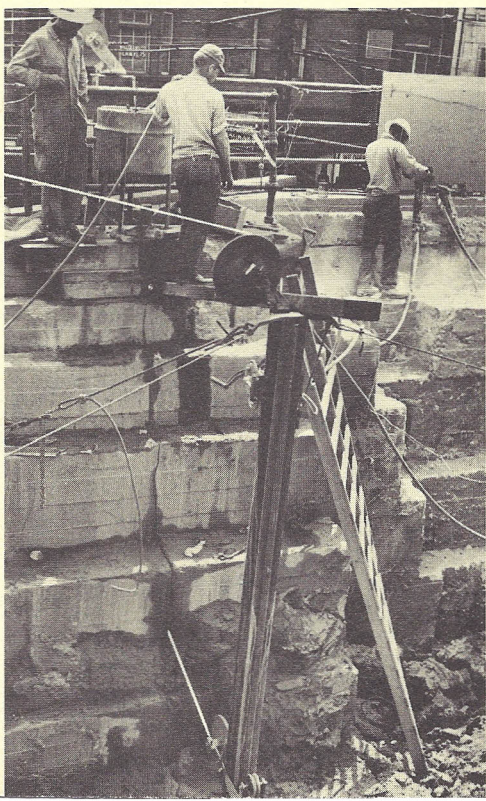
In the metal platform canopies, which extend over the roofs of cars at train stops protecting boarding and alighting passengers from rain, sleet and snow, the station color code is repeated. Translucent fiberglass panels are interspersed with the metal panels of the canopies.

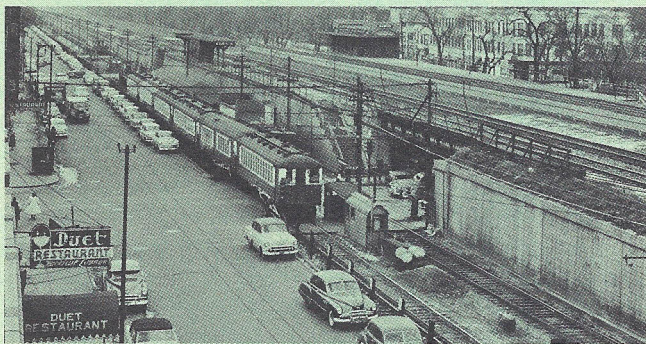
Platforms and stations are illuminated by fluorescent luminaires.

At the platforms, the lights are turned off and on automatically by photo-electric cells. Lighting in the stations is controlled by the agents.

Facilitating supervision of operations are a line supervisory and public address system, installed at Central-Parkside, Austin-Mason and Harlem-Marion stations. These facilities, connected with CTA's Operations Control Center in the Merchandise Mart, signal the arrival and departure of trains and enable Operations Control to give orders to train crews or instructions to passengers over the public address system.

Using a technique new to the construction industry, the retaining wall at Central Avenue was "sliced" by a wire-cutting process. Sections of the retaining wall were removed at nine locations along the Lake rapid transit route to construct the new station buildings. The station buildings are "tucked into" the embankment in the space made available by removal of sections of the retaining wall.





View looking west at Lake and Central shows the right-of-way of CTA's Lake rapid transit route in Lake street alongside the elevated right-of-way of the North Western railroad as it appeared in 1954.

## Elevation Long Advocated

Elevation of the Lake Street route through the Austin and Oak Park communities was long advocated by civic leaders, public officials and business groups. Because of the highly desirable public benefits to be achieved in safer and improved street traffic flow, and in better transit service, the public agencies concerned jointly agreed to prorate the construction and material cost of shifting the street-level rapid transit operation to the south side of the North Western's elevated right-of-way.

The cost was shared as follows: the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads and the State of Illinois, \$1,000,000; County of Cook, \$1,000,000; Oak Park, \$800,000; the City of Chicago and the CTA, \$600,000 each. The Bureau of Public Road's share was specifically limited to elevation and its approaches at Harlem Avenue, an arterial highway.

In addition to contributing its share of the project cost, CTA is paying the North Western a rental fee of \$168,800 per year for the use of space for its two tracks and platforms.

Construction of the project required intricate and complex staging because both CTA and North Western train operations had to be maintained during the construction period.

To make way for the CTA, the North Western realigned its two northernmost tracks, constructed and signaled a new third track, and constructed a new island platform for its riders at Marion Street. This work was completed in October, 1961, when the south side of its right-of-way was released for the elevation project.

# Construction Began Mid-Year 1961

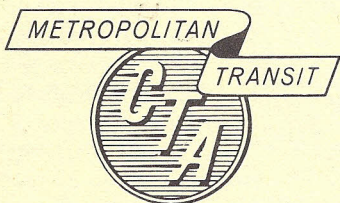
Preliminary construction work on the portion of the work to be performed by CTA for the project sponsors began in mid-year 1961 when eastbound CTA trains began operating on a temporary trestle and tracks immediately west of Laramie Avenue while work progressed at that point on a permanent structure connecting the elevated section of the Lake Street route with the North Western right-of-way. CTA began track work October 23, 1961.

General Contractor on the project was the M. A. Lombard & Son Company, of Alsip. CTA forces performed the track work for the project sponsors. Electrical distribution and communications systems were installed by Contracting and Materials Company of Evanston.

Staging of the project was as follows: (1) realignment of the two northernmost North Western tracks, construction of a third track, signaling and a new platform at Marion Street; (2) relocation of a water main from the North Western right-of-way to South Boulevard; (3) construction of a temporary trestle to maintain CTA service; (4) realignment of the southernmost North Western tracks for CTA use, construction of CTA train platforms, and construction of station buildings; (5) construction of structure permanently connecting CTA's elevated right-of-way with the North Western right-of-way; (6) connection of CTA's elevated tracks with its new tracks on the North Western embankment; (7) completion of permanent station facilities after CTA ground-level tracks are removed.

## PLEASE NOTE:

Inasmuch as the new stations are approximately at street-level, their completion had to wait until CTA's tracks at street-grade were removed, resulting unavoidably, in some inconvenience to our patrons. For their understanding and forbearance CTA is deeply appreciative.



10-27-62

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