

# Companion Guide to the *Riding into the Future* Report

This document is a companion guide for *Riding into the Future: A Regional Vision for the Implementation of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA Act)*, a report written and distributed by Metropolitan Planning Council in April 2026. This companion guide provides an overview of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA) Act ([SB2111 Enrolled Version/Public Act 104-0457](#)), which has a June 1, 2026, effective date.

Click below to read [\*Riding into the Future: A Regional Vision for the Implementation of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority \(NITA\) Act.\*](#)



**PG. LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE**

- 1 IDOT establishes the **Interagency Coordinating Committee on Transit Innovation, Integration, and Reform** to advise IDOT on strategies and initiatives that improve access to transit and better integrate transit with intercity rail and intercity bus networks in Illinois outside of the Northeast Illinois metropolitan region—aka Downstate
- 6 **People Over Parking Act:** Minimum parking requirements banned within 1/2 mile of “public transportation hubs” and within 1/8 mile of “public transportation corridors” where there is frequent bus service
- 14 **State Ethics Act:** Regional transit boards (e.g., NITA) barred from creating or retaining an investigative body that investigates matters under the Office of the Executive Inspector General's jurisdiction
- 16 Secretary of State updates the **Illinois Paratransit certification of eligibility for visitors** and takes other action so that a person certified as eligible for paratransit service by one transit agency can receive such service by transit agencies statewide
- 34 IDOT's performance-based project selection process to prioritize taxpayer investment in State-owned transportation assets that add capacity shall “**evaluate project potential for mode shift away from single-occupancy vehicles and commercial motor vehicles**” [39]
- 45 **Bus rapid transit and related technologies:** [IDOT], Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, and counties and municipalities in the metropolitan region shall collaborate with and provide support to the Authority in the implementation of bus rapid transit and bus priority service using the expressway, tollway, and other roadway systems in the metropolitan region. IDOT to work with transit providers on transportation technology R&D.
- 46 **IDOT Transit Integration Policy Development Committee:**
- Composed of experts inside and outside IDOT
  - Purpose: “to better integrate transit policy, planning, and design into Department decisions and highway planning and design”
  - Shall research “global best practices on optimizing roadway for public transportation services”
- 49 IDOT appoints a **Transit Coordination Oversight Officer** to oversee IDOT's implementation of the policies and processes recommended by the Transit Integration Policy Development Committee
- 49 IDOT directed to conduct a **planning study for the Joliet train station** for improvements necessary for passenger rail service to Peoria and other locations outside the Chicago metropolitan region
- 50 IDOT to establish a **Transit to Trails Grant Program** for projects that facilitate travel by public transportation to public recreation sites
- 52 IDOT directed to **procure a transition consultant to assist NITA in implementing the NITA Act reforms.** The consultant will assist in developing a NITA transition plan “including the transition of functions between the Service Boards and the Authority, the evaluation of existing policy processes, and the development of a process for efficient and effective operations by both the Northern Illinois Transit Authority and the Service Boards”
- 54 **Chicago Transit Authority Act:**
- Allows CTA to provide service throughout the metropolitan region (conforms to Pace's and Metra's authorization) [55]
  - Authorizes CTA to proceed with debt issuances contemplated by the CTA's existing Full Funding Grant Agreements on the Red Line Extension and Red/Purple Lines Modernization-Phase 1 projects; NITA handles other debt issuances for CTA, Metra, and Pace [57]
  - Primary role for CTA is providing transit service as directed and funded by NITA; the CTA:  
*shall use powers delegated to it by the Northern Illinois Transit Authority to oversee the delivery of public transportation in the metropolitan region, provided that the Northern Illinois Transit Authority shall retain primary responsibility for setting fares, service standards, schedules, and coordinated fare collection so that the public transportation system in the metropolitan region operates on a one-network, one-timetable, one-ticket model for transit users.* [59]

- **CTA Board** [86]:
  - Governor appoints two directors; one also serves on NITA Board
  - Chicago Mayor appoints three directors; one also serves on the NITA Board [NITA Act says two also serve on NITA Board – this discrepancy is expected to be corrected in subsequent legislation]
  - Cook County President appoint two directors; one also serves on NITA Board
  - NITA Board sets role, powers, and responsibilities of CTA Executive Director; NITA Chair and ED involved in selection process for CTA ED; NITA Board must approve CTA ED appointment [93]

108 Local Mass Transit District (**Downstate**) Act amended to give transit agencies enhanced powers to engage in **transit-supportive development** or trail-supportive development [110]

110 Visitor paratransit: transit agencies **required to honor paratransit eligibility determinations made by other transit agencies** and offer visitors paratransit service within one day of being notified that a visitor has been found eligible for paratransit service

## 112 Northern Illinois Transit Authority Act

- RTA lives on via “corporate existence” [112], primarily for purposes of protecting existing RTA bondholders [117]
- Creates Northern Illinois Transit Authority [117]
- Supermajority voting requirements for NITA Board action [119] – either:
  - Fifteen of NITA’s 20 directors; or 12 of NITA’s directors if there are at least two affirmative votes each from directors appointed by: (i) Illinois Governor; (ii) Chicago mayor; (iii) Cook County president; and (iv) collar counties
- Allocation of responsibilities between NITA and operating agencies [121]:
  - Key responsibilities such as fare setting, service planning, and capital programming consolidated in NITA
- Operating agencies “provide for the metropolitan region public transportation service of the level, nature, and kind determined by [NITA] [123]
- NITA:
 

*has ultimate responsibility for providing the metropolitan region with a high-quality public transportation system and, subject to the requirements of this Act and applicable law and agreements, shall have the final responsibility for allocating duties among the Service Boards and between the Service Boards and the Authority itself. Nothing in this Act shall prevent the Authority from delegating to the Service Boards powers and duties in addition to those expressly assigned to the Service Boards under this Act.* [124]
- **Strategic Plan** includes new goals [126]:
  - Increasing per capita transit ridership
  - Using transit as tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
  - Improving access to jobs by residents of low-income communities
  - Optimizing roads to support safe and convenient transit service
  - Advancing land-use policies that leverage and support transit assets
  - Better integrate transit with other forms of active transportation
- **Capital Projects:**
  - Service operators propose capital projects for NITA’s consideration after consultation with labor representatives [134]
  - NITA assigns capital project delivery responsibilities to the service operators; NITA retains:
 

*responsibility for larger or comprehensive improvements such as Regionally Significant Projects, as designated by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; new service infrastructure such as a new rail line or a new BRT corridor; large-scale rebuild of existing service infrastructure; new service vehicle or rolling stock purchases; or improvements that will be used by multiple Service Boards.* [135]
- **Service planning** [138]:
  - NITA shall develop a “regionally coordinated service plan”
  - NITA may issue an RFP to service operators
  - Service operators propose service plans
  - NITA reviews/approves and rolls them into a regional service plan

142 **Performance audits** of NITA and Service Boards shall be conducted by the Auditor General every five years

- 143 **Operations:** Service operators may only provide service adhering as closely as possible to that described in the regionwide service plan most recently adopted by NITA [144]
- 144 **NITA is responsible** for setting fares, administering reduced fare programs, and implementing regional fare collection system
- By two years after effective date, NITA shall develop income-based reduced fare and fare capping programs [150]
  - NITA takes responsibility for public transit trip-planning and real-time vehicle arrival information for the region [153]
- 153 **Pedestrian access to transit:** Local governments encouraged to connect bus stops to sidewalks when constructing or reconstructing roadways that have transit service stops.
- 163 **Transit traffic law enforcement program**—e.g., blocked bus lanes; cooperation with municipalities encouraged, but NITA can set up its own enforcement program if necessary
- 169 **Safety:**
- **NITA Law Enforcement Task Force** led by Cook County Sheriff’s Office prepares report with recommendations on improving public transit system safety by end of 2026 [169]
  - **Required NITA Board vote on sworn law enforcement officer crime prevention program** to protect transit users and workers by June 1, 2027 [173]
  - Creation of **NITA Office of Transit Safety and Experience** [175]
  - **Coordinated Safety Response Council** including transit safety and law enforcement leadership and community organizations with a report required within 9 months about a long-term safety strategy [178]
  - NITA Board: **Standing Safety Subcommittee** established [184]
  - NITA shall adopt **safety design and maintenance standards** and implement a rider app for real-time reporting of safety issues [185]
  - **Bus shields** mandated to protect bus operators [188]
- 190 Senate approval required for **appointment of NITA Executive Director** through mid-2030
- 192 Existing **collective bargaining and labor protections** in the RTA Act preserved in the NITA Act
- 210 **Fast Track process** for speeding delivery of capital projects
- 217 **Transit-supportive development**
- *[NITA] shall have the power to acquire, construct, own, operate, or maintain for public service transit-supportive development in the metropolitan region and all the powers necessary or convenient to accomplish the transit supportive development purposes.* [218]
  - NITA prepares transit-supportive development opportunity inventory of real estate [219]
  - Transit-Supportive Development Incentive Program [221]
- 224 **Transit ambassadors:** By July 1, 2027, NITA shall implement a transit ambassador program to increase safety for passengers and personnel, provide passenger education and assistance, and help passengers navigate all transit systems under NITA
- Employed by operating entities; NITA does training/coordination
  - Responsibilities include:
    - Rider assistance—e.g., travel navigation
    - Liaising w/law enforcement, social services, and community resources to address unsafe conditions, connect people to social services
    - Monitoring passenger activity and compliance with law & rules
- 226 **Language Accessibility**
- Translator services
  - Multi-lingual signage
  - Language access plan

- 228 Medical service cost reimbursement for Forest Park, Oak Park, River Forest, and Rosemont for responding to incidents on CTA rail lines
- 229 Renovation or construction of two CTA rail stations
- 230 **NITA Board of Directors**—appointments and duties
- Chicago mayor (5)
    - one director who also serves on CTA Board; one director who also serves on Metra Board; one director who also serves on Pace Board; two directors who serve on NITA Board only
  - Governor (5)
    - one director who also serves on CTA Board; one director who also serves on Metra Board; one director who also serves on Pace Board; two directors who serve on NITA Board only
  - President of Cook County Board (5)
    - one director who also serves on CTA Board; two directors who also serve on Metra Board; one director who also serves on Pace Board; one director who serves on NITA Board only
  - Collar Counties (5)
    - DuPage: one director who also serves on Pace Board
    - Kane: one director who also serves on Pace Board
    - Lake: one director who also serves on Metra Board
    - McHenry: one director who also serves on Metra Board
    - Will: one director who also serves on Pace Board
  - All appointments are subject to advice and consent of Chicago City Council, Illinois Senate, Cook County Board, and collar county boards, respectively
- Initial directors split between three-year and five-year terms; all later director appointees have five-year terms
- NITA directors elect a chair from among the NITA directors [235]
  - Required professional development training for new directors plus annual training on financial management and procurement laws, policies, and procedures [241]
- 245 **Pace Board of Directors**
- Governor: one director who also serves on NITA Board
  - Chicago Mayor: two directors (one also serves on NITA Board)
  - Cook County Board President: three directors (one also serves on NITA Board)
  - Collar Counties: (5)
    - DuPage: one director who also serves on NITA Board
    - Kane: one director who also serves on NITA Board
    - Lake: one director
    - McHenry: one director
    - Will: one director who also serves on NITA Board
  - All appointments subject to advice and consent of Illinois Senate, Chicago City Council, Cook County Board, and collar county boards, respectively
  - NITA plays active role in selection of and defining roles, powers, and responsibilities of Pace's Executive Director [252]
  - Powers [257/262]:
    - *[Pace] shall use powers delegated to it by the Authority to oversee the delivery of public transportation in the metropolitan region, provided that the Authority shall retain primary responsibility for setting fares, service standards, schedules, and coordinated fare collection so that the public transportation system in the metropolitan region operates on a one-network, one-timetable, one-ticket model for transit users.*

- 274 **Metra Board of Directors**
- Governor: one director who also serves on NITA Board)
  - Chicago Mayor: two directors (one also serves on NITA Board)
  - Cook County Board President: three directors (two also serve on NITA Board)
  - Collar counties: (5)
    - DuPage: one director
    - Kane: one director
    - Lake: one director who also serves on NITA Board
    - McHenry: one director who also serves on NITA Board
    - Will: one director
  - All appointments subject to advice and consent of Illinois Senate, Chicago City Council, Cook County Board, and collar county boards, respectively
  - NITA's role in selecting and defining roles, powers, and responsibilities of Metra's Executive Director [278]
  - Metra's powers/responsibilities [281]
  - Metra barred from prohibiting South Shore trains from serving passengers at Metra stations [289]
  - Metra to pilot regional rail scheduling model on its Rock Island line and study extension of Metra Electric Line to Kankakee [290]
  - Process for preparing annual regional transit budget revamped under NITA [291]
- 302 Fixed funding formulas directing sales tax revenue to service boards eliminated
- 306 NITA required to implement ~\$50M in **service efficiencies**
- 306 Revised **fare-box recovery ratio** requirement of 25% and then 20% starting in 2029; various recovery ratio calculation exemptions and exceptions now in the RTA Act eliminated
- 353 NITA Board authorized to increase **regional sales tax** rates by 0.25%—e.g., from 1.0% to 1.25% [331]; Board must act within 60 days of effective date
- 357 “Hold harmless” provisions covering allocation of funding to the operating agencies through FY 31; after that NITA shall **allocate funding according to the Service Standards**
- 382 **Jobs Plan** requirements for major rolling stock procurements
- 387 State **Public Transportation Fund match** of regional sales tax revenue reduced through calculation formula changes
- 427 **Diversity reporting requirements**
- NITA Board can remove executive directors for cause, which includes failure to comply with Service Plans, Annual Budget, etc.
  - NITA's executive director also gets annual performance review [434]
- 430 **Dial-a-ride (DAR) service** program
- Study of DAR services and opportunities for improved coordination
  - NITA can establish a DAR policy and fund a DAR service program
    - Participating DAR service providers must accept NITA terms re: integration into regional transit system

- 435 **Service Standards** that guide allocation of transit service across the region adopted by December 31, 2027:
- *Shall identify quantitative and qualitative attributes of quality public transit service using metrics drawn from the performance of high-quality transit systems in global metropolitan areas with populations and metropolitan economies comparable to the metropolitan region.*
  - *Shall cover the entire metropolitan region and include the development of transit propensity thresholds for each type of service or mode. Transit propensity metrics shall include, but are not limited to, population density, employment density, low-income populations, disabled populations, zero-car households, intersection density, and the presence of sidewalks. The Authority shall develop weights for each metric and a scoring system to determine transit propensity.*
  - Phased implementation
  - NITA will report on system performance measured against the Service Standards
  - Service performance reporting by all operators compared against service standards
- 440 **Chief Internal Auditor** office established
- Reports directly to the NITA Board
  - Broad audit authority
- 450 **Transition process**
- IDOT secures consultant to assist in transition process
  - NITA sets up **Transition Working Group** to advise on transition. Extensive list of topics to be addressed
  - **Transition plan** assembled after a review of key functions/processes by July 1, 2027
- 454 **ADA Advisory Council** established
- Purpose: Advise NITA Board on issues relating to disabled riders
  - NITA provides technical support through its Office of Disability Policy and Planning
- 457 **Riders Advisory Council** established
- Purpose: Advise NITA Board on issues relating to riders
  - NITA provides technical support
- 688 **Interest on the Road Fund and the State Construction Account Fund** used for transit construction improvements or debt service—90% for NITA and 10% for Downstate mass transit districts
- 703/713 Amendments to **Downstate Public Transportation Act** increasing State support and allowing use of Downstate Capital Improvement Fund monies for intercity rail capital startup projects for connectivity between downstate communities and Chicago
- 859 Illinois Tollway authorized to increase passenger vehicle tolls by 45¢ and commercial vehicle tolls by 30%; both are inflation indexed going forward
- 944 **Revenue from sales tax on motor fuel** allocated to NITA (85%) and Downstate transit agencies (15%)