

Fixed Rail Transit Modes

1) Commuter rail (also called **metropolitan rail**, **regional rail**, or **suburban rail**)

- An electric or diesel propelled railway that runs between a central city and adjacent suburbs 10 to 50 miles from the city center.
- Uses using either locomotive hauled or self propelled railroad passenger cars
- Characterized by multi-trip tickets, specific station to station fares, railroad employment practices, twice hourly train service during rush hour, and usually only one or two stations in the central business district.
- Commuter rail often reaches speeds of 69 mph.
- There are 22 commuter rail systems across the county.
- Metra is a commuter rail system.

2) Heavy rail (**metro**, **subway**, **elevated rail**, **rapid transit**, or **rapid rail**)

- An electric railway with the capacity for a heavy volume of traffic.
- System is built for high speed (69 mph+) and rapid acceleration passenger rail cars operating singly or in multi-car trains on fixed rails. However, in dense urban settings with frequent stops, high speeds are often not attained.
- Separate rights-of-way (either subways or elevated track) from which all other vehicular and foot traffic are excluded.
- There are 15 heavy rail systems in the U.S.
- The CTA subway and “el” rail system is considered heavy rail.

3) Light rail (**streetcar**, **tramway**, or **trolley**)

- Lightweight passenger rail cars operating singly or in short, usually two-car, trains on fixed rails in right-of-way that is generally not separated from other traffic.
- Light rail vehicles are typically driven at speeds less than 45 mph and are powered from an overhead electric line via a trolley or a pantograph.
- Some streetcars, such as in New Orleans and San Francisco, share the road with automotive traffic in dense urban settings, have more frequent stops, and move at speeds of 10-20 mph.
- As of 2005, there were 29 light rail systems around the U.S., and that number is rapidly growing as many communities have light rail systems planned.
- No light rail system currently exists in the Chicago region. The nearest light rail system is the Kenosha, Wisconsin street car system.

Types of Bus Service

1) Local service

- Vehicles may stop every block or two along a route several miles long - by far the most common type of bus service found in systems such as the CTA.
- When limited to a small geographic area or to short-distance trips, local service is often called **circulator, feeder, neighborhood, trolley, or shuttle service**.
 - a. Such routes, which often have a lower fare than regular local service, may operate in a loop and connect, often at a transfer center or rail station, to major routes for travel to more far-flung destinations.
 - b. Examples are office park circulators, historic district routes, transit mall shuttles, rail feeder routes, and university campus loops. The University of Chicago in Hyde Park employs a circulator bus system in conjunction with the CTA.

2) Express service

- Speeds up longer trips, especially in major metropolitan areas during heavily-patronized peak commuting hours, by operating long distances without stopping.
- Examples include park-and-ride routes between suburban parking lots and the central business district that operate on freeways, and express buses on major streets that operate local service on the outlying portions of a route until a certain point and then operate non-stop to the central business district.
- The CTA and Pace operate numerous express service routes.

3) Limited-stop service

- A hybrid between local and express service, where the stops may be several blocks to a mile or more apart to speed up the trip.

4) Bus rapid transit (BRT)

- A type of limited-stop service developed in the 1990s that relies on technology to help speed up the service.
- It can operate on exclusive bus lanes, high-occupancy-vehicle lanes, expressways, or ordinary streets.
- A BRT line combines intelligent transportation systems technology, priority for transit, rapid and convenient fare collection, and integration with land use policy in order to substantially upgrade bus system performance.
- Canada has the most successful examples of BRT systems in North America, most notably in Calgary and Ottawa.
- Pace has planned BRT systems for Cermak Road in the near western suburbs and Golf Road in the near north and northwest suburbs.