

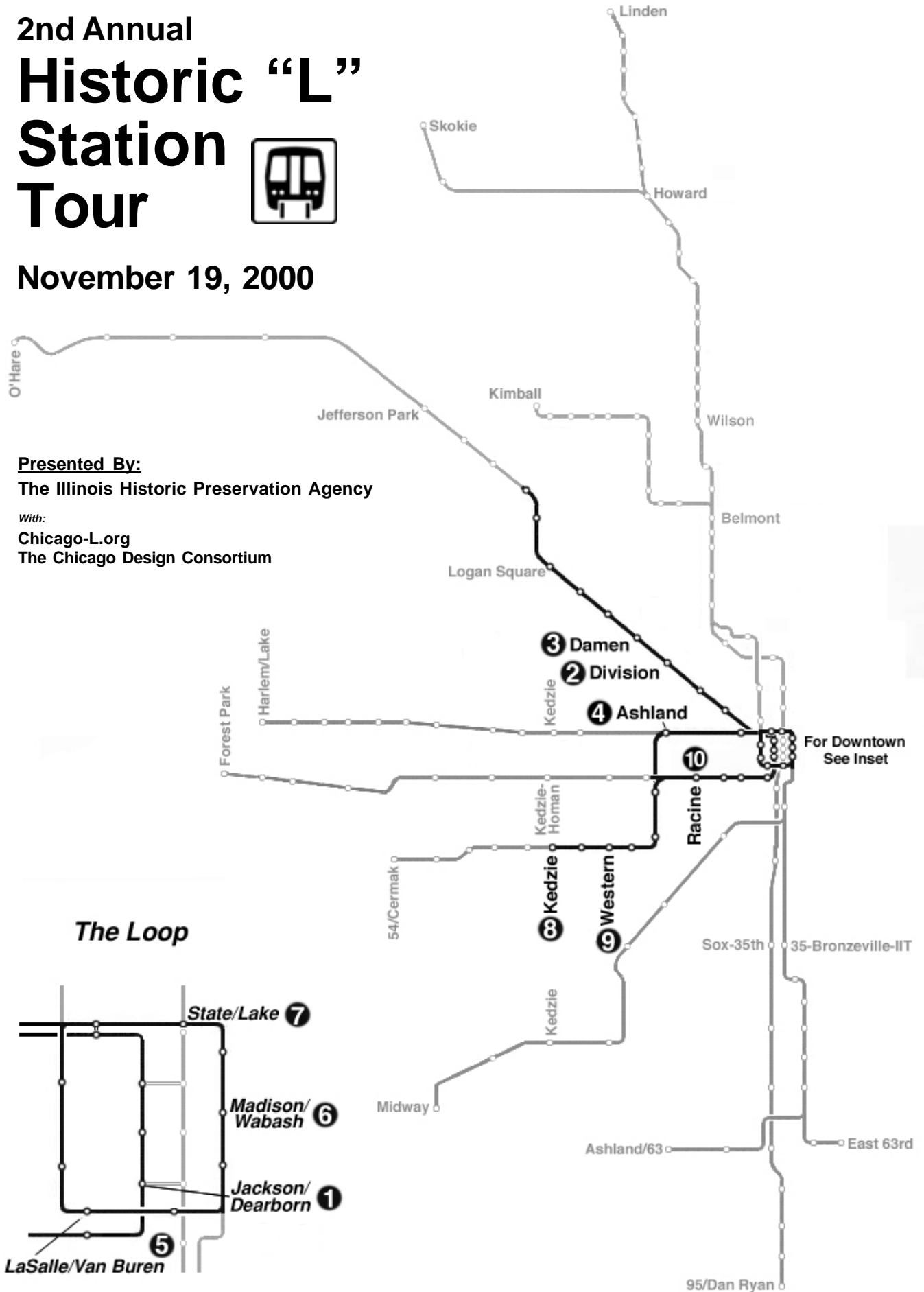
2nd Annual Historic "L" Station Tour



November 19, 2000

Presented By:
The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

With:
Chicago-L.org
The Chicago Design Consortium





2nd Annual

Historic “L” Station Tour Guide



Dearborn-Milwaukee Subway

Boarding at Jackson/Van Buren, you will find yourself in the Dearborn-Milwaukee Subway, now a part of the Blue Line. The original subways — this one and the State Street Subway one block east — were started as New Deal WPA projects, with ownership held by the City of Chicago. State Street was completed in 1943, allowed to continue despite WWII materials and manpower shortages due to its importance for the transport of war workers, but Dearborn-Milwaukee was put on hold and not completed until 1951. Each station in the Loop has two mezzanine entrances, with a stopping location on the continuous platform between the mezzanines. Each track runs in a separate parallel tunnel.



A VIP crowd views the opening of the Dearborn Subway in February 1951.

O’Hare Branch (Milwaukee elevated)

The Blue Line rises onto an elevated structure just after Division station. This segment was built in 1895 as the Metropolitan West Side Elevated’s Logan Square (Northwest) Branch. The subway was not its original path downtown; the original path turned south at the subway portal and ran parallel to Paulina Street, meeting the Metropolitan main line into downtown at Marshfield Junction. We will visit the former location of this junction later and see a small remaining section of this former trackage.

Three original Met stations survive here: Damen, Western, and California. All retain some original



A train of original 6000-series units emerges from the portal of the Dearborn-Milwaukee Subway at Evergreen where it joins the 1895-vintage Met elevated in this early 1950s view.

19th century features, variously including original station houses, canopies, platforms, and/or lights. After California, the vintage line descends into the 1970 Milwaukee-Kimball Subway. Ahead and to the left of the subway portal was the original yard and terminal at Logan Square. After two stations — the new Logan Square and Belmont — the Blue Line rises to the surface and enters the median of the Kennedy Expressway. The Kennedy Extension originally terminated at Jefferson Park (and was completed to O’Hare in 1984); we will turn around at the Addison crossover just north of Addison station.

Congress (Forest Park) Branch

After returning south over the old Milwaukee Avenue elevated and through the Dearborn-Milwaukee Subway, you will find yourself climbing a steep grade (the last station in the subway, Clinton, is the lowest point in the subway system) into daylight and into the median of the Eisenhower Expressway.

The Congress Line opened in 1958, replacing the Met's Garfield Park Line (the aforementioned original Met route into downtown). The Congress Line (now sometimes referred to as the Forest Park branch) pioneered the concept of rapid transit in a freeway median, allowing both cost reduction and a more compact transportation corridor. The model has since been repeated in Chicago several more times and in other cities as well.

The stations here are considerably more spartan than those we've already seen, but still contain many details not found in some of the modern CTA stations of the 1970s and 1980s. Most include an island platform, two small station houses on the overpass at either end of the stop containing only a ticket booth and turnstiles, and a long, enclosed, sloping passageway/ramp



A Milwaukee-Congress "A" train of 6000-series PCC cars travels eastbound in the median of the brand-new Congress Superhighway. A CTA bus can be seen on the overpass in the background in this 1958 photo.

connecting the two. A brochure, published by the City of Chicago to commemorate the initiation of service June 22, 1958, describes the stations this way:

Each station platform in the expressway right-of-way is the island type, 600 feet long and canopied throughout its entire length. Supported by structural aluminum columns, the canopy extends beyond the platform edge and over the roofs of cars....

Station design here is somewhat unique, resulting from a compromise between the historic concept of closely spaced stations (favored by aldermen) and widely spaced stations, coordinated with bus feeder routes (preferred by eager CTA planners anxious to improve transit service and system productivity). While there are obvious disadvantages to the long ramp concept, the compromise design did avoid the additional stops the CTA planners hoped to get rid of.

We will return to the Congress Line later. Now, we will ascend on the tracks rising up from between the Congress Line, leading to the Douglas Branch and the Paulina Connector.

Paulina Connector

After rising above the Congress Line, the Douglas route proceeds south. But branching north is the Paulina Connector. Where the connector branches off is Harrison Junction, a block south of the Marshfield Junction mentioned earlier. The Paulina Connector was part of the Met's Logan Square branch's path to downtown, but with the opening of the more direct Dearborn-Milwaukee Subway in 1951 the elevated route became non-revenue trackage. A junction with the Lake Street Line was built in 1954 (which we will pass over to access the Green Line) so that Douglas branch trains could temporarily access the

Loop using this route from 1954 to 1958 while the Congress Line was under construction. Today, the Paulina Connector is used for equipment transfers, as it is the only connection between the Blue Line and the rest of the system.

Lake Street Line

The Lake Street Line, Chicago's second elevated line, opened in 1893 between Market Terminal (now demolished, formally at the corner of Madison and Wacker) and California, operating over the Lake Street public way. Over the next several years, the line was extended to Oak Park, reaching Forest Park Terminal in 1910. The Lake Street Line has two of the "L"'s oldest stations — Ashland and Homan (currently being moved to a new location at Central Park) — with their unique Queen Anne and Victorian styling. The line runs through a formal industrial area that has seen some gentrification and renaissance in recent years. Traveling east toward the Loop, you will pass over the Kennedy Expressway, then after the Clinton station over the Metra approach into the Ogilvie Transportation Center.

Union Loop

From the Lake Street Line, you will enter the Loop through Tower 18, once the busiest railroad junction in the world. The only man who could accomplish the difficult task of bringing a common downtown terminal to the Chicago elevated rapid transit system was Charles Tyson Yerkes. He had enough political deftness and power to convince store owners to sign consent forms allowing construction of the overhead structures on their streets (although alley routes were briefly contemplated). Though it was difficult — two segments had to be obtained under the names of existing "L" companies while for the two other legs, two companies, the Union Elevated Railroad and the Union Consolidated Elevated Railroad, had to be created — Yerkes managed to coordinate it all. As can be imagined from its piecemeal method of obtaining of leases, the Union Loop (referred to simply as "the Loop" today) opened in pieces, starting in 1895, with the Lake Street "L" making the first full circuit in 1897.

Douglas Line

After touring the Loop and returning over the tracks of the Lake Street and Paulina Connector, you will find yourself on the Douglas branch. The Douglas was the third main branch of the Metropolitan West Side Elevated, turning south from Marshfield Junction (now from the Loomis Junction with the Congress Line) to Pilsen, then turning west toward Lawndale and Cicero. The line, like most early elevated routes, opened in segments from 1896 to 1924. Over 100 years old, the structure has begun to deteriorate and the CTA is planning to embark on a major overhaul soon. Several stations will be rebuilt in the process. The Polk station, first on the branch, was rebuilt in the 1970s and is in the middle of the Rush-Presbyterian - St. Luke's Medical Center.

Western was the first terminal in 1896; it was later extended to 40th Avenue (Pulaski) and eventually to Oak Park Avenue in Berwyn, only to be cut back to 54th Avenue by the CTA in 1952. In 1997, the CTA discontinued night and weekend service due to low ridership (allowing you plenty of uninterrupted time to look around the line!).



A Douglas train of 6000-series cars. Note the circular coil on the bottom left: it emits a radio signal that triggers the proper alignment for the train at Paulina Junction, where this 1953 photo was taken. The sign on the chains indicates that it will stop a Wood Street station, a "special service" station between 18th and Hoyne, now long demolished.



2nd Annual

Historic "L" Station Roster



Jackson/Dearborn 1

Location: 219/314 S. Dearborn Street

Date in Service: 1951

Built By: City of Chicago/Works Progress Administration

Current Line: Blue Line (Milwaukee-Dearborn Subway)



Division 2

Location: 1200 N. Milwaukee Avenue

Date in Service: 1951

Built By: City of Chicago/Works Progress Administration

Current Line: Blue Line (Milwaukee-Dearborn Subway)



Damen 3

Location: 1588 N. Damen Avenue

Date in Service: 1895

Built By: Metropolitan West Side Elevated Railroad

Current Line: Blue Line (O'Hare branch)



Ashland 4

Location: 1601 W. Lake Street

Date in Service: 1893

Built By: Lake Street Elevated Railroad

Current Line: Green Line (Lake branch)



LaSalle/Van Buren 5

Location: 121 W. Van Buren Street

Date in Service: 1897

Built By: Union Consolidated Elevated Railroad

Current Line: Orange Line (Midway), Brown Line (Ravenswood), Purple Line (Evanston Express)



Madison/Wabash 6

Location: 2 N. Wabash Avenue

Date in Service: 1896

Built By: Union Elevated Railroad

Current Line: Green Line (Lake-Ashland-East 63rd), Orange Line (Midway), Brown Line (Ravenswood), Purple Line (Evanston Express)



State/Lake 7

Location: 200 N. State Street

Date in Service: 1895

Built By: Union Elevated Railroad

Current Line: Green Line (Lake-Ashland-East 63rd), Orange Line (Midway), Brown Line (Ravenswood), Purple Line (Evanston Express)



Kedzie 8

Location: 1944 S. Kedzie Avenue

Date in Service: 1902

Built By: Metropolitan West Side Elevated Railroad

Current Line: Blue Line (Douglas branch)



Western 9

Location: 2009 S. Western Avenue

Date in Service: 1896

Built By: Metropolitan West Side Elevated Railroad

Current Line: Blue Line (Douglas branch)



Racine 10

Location: 430 S. Racine Avenue

Date in Service: 1958

Built By: City of Chicago/Chicago Transit Authority

Current Line: Blue Line (Congress branch)

For more information about the “L”, visit <http://www.Chicago-L.org>

All photos by Graham Garfield, except as follows: Photos of Jackson and Division, Courtesy of the Chicago Transit Authority