

5th Annual Historic "L" Station Tour

October 26, 2003

Presented By:
Chicago-L.org



Evolution of the West Side "L" Lines



Legend

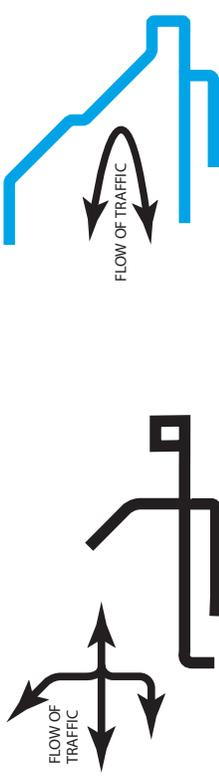
	Route In Use		Station Abandoned or Demolished
	Metropolitan Elevated built 1895-1930		Route Abandoned or Demolished
	Dearborn Subway built 1951		Other Routes Shown for reference
	Congress Line built 1958-1960		Auxiliary station entrance
	Kennedy Extension built 1970		Former auxiliary entrance
	O'Hare Extension built 1983-1984		Now closed, abandoned or demolished



The evolution of rapid transit on the West Side can be confusing due to the complexity of its history, especially concerning routings.

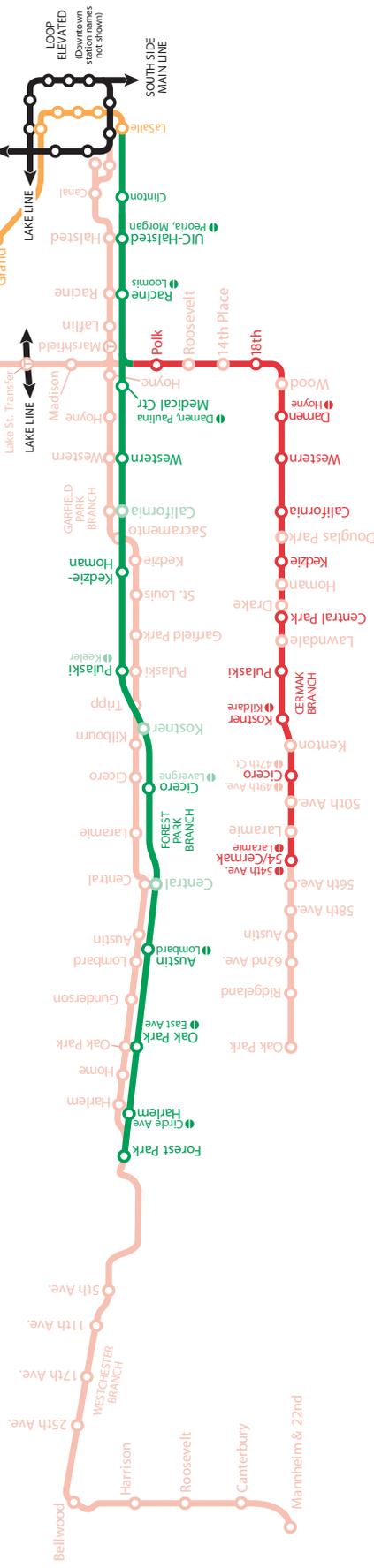
The main difference is that whereas today the lines on the Northwest and West sides are through-routed via downtown, originally all lines from the Northwest and West sides entered downtown over common trackage and terminated on the Loop. The routes were similar to a fork, with a thick stem and prongs at the end.

Beginning in 1951 with the opening of the subway and finishing in 1958 with the opening of the Congress Line, the routes were through routed into the West-Northwest Route. Now, the route was similar in shape to a horseshoe, with the line beginning and ending on the West Side. This routing continues today at the CTA Blue Line.



Downtown-West Side Routing 1895 - 1954

Downtown-West Side Routing 1958 - present





5th Annual Historic “L” Station Tour Guide

Milwaukee-Dearborn Subway

The tour begins at LaSalle/Congress station in the Milwaukee-Dearborn Subway. This was one of two subways built for Chicago beginning in the Depression -- the other being the State Street Subway on today's Red Line - - and while they were started at the same time, the opening of the Dearborn route was delayed by 8 years after the State Street route came into use.

Federal dollars made available by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs during the Great Depression made the construction of the subways possible, allowing Chicago to carry out a civic improvement it'd long planned for but been able to get off the ground. Work on the Milwaukee-Dearborn tubes began in March 1939. Chicago built its subways using the deep bore method, widely used on the London subway tubes. The track in each direction were contained in separate tubes, each dug with its own boring shield twenty-five feet in diameter. Each tunnel was then backed up with continuous steel liner plates and ribs, reinforced with steel bars, and covered with concrete.

While the subway was under construction, world events took a critical turn. Subway Route No. 2 (Milwaukee-Dearborn), which was 80% complete in 1942, was mothballed after the war began due to wartime labor and materials rationing, but Route No. 1 (State Street) was classified as an essential wartime transportation link for defense plant workers and was allowed to continue. Completion of the stations was delayed by a materials shortage due to rationing for World War II.

The City would not return to work on the Dearborn Subway for several years, leaving the partially completed tubes mothballed under the city streets. Finally, in late 1945, work resumed on the subway. Twelve years after beginning the project, Chicago's second subway was ready for operation. An opening ceremony was held on February 24, 1951 presided over by Mayor Martin Kennelly, who cut a red, white, and blue ribbon stretched across one track with a large pair a shears at Washington station. The Milwaukee-Dearborn Subway officially opened for revenue service after midnight on February 25, 1951.



Mayor Kennelly cuts the ribbon on the new Dearborn Subway, with the help of radio and film cowboy Monte Bleu, as reporters look on at the ceremonial opening on February 24, 1951. (Photo from CTA Collection)

The Milwaukee-Dearborn tubes gave the Logan Square branch (*see next section*) a more direct route to downtown, entering from the northwest rather than the more circuitous approach from the southwest via the old Metropolitan main line. It would also allow a through-routing of the Logan Square line with the Garfield Park and Douglas Park lines, rather than having all three enter via common trackage (the Met main line) and terminate on the Loop, providing better service between neighborhoods and decreasing the number of train movements necessary to serve all three lines.

The architecture of the stations was streamlined Art Moderne with some Art Deco elements. All of the stations have their fare controls at a lower mezzanine level. The mezzanine station houses had smooth concrete floors and ceilings and off-white glazed ceramic tile walls. Each station also had several amenities for the use of passengers, such as public phones, lockers, restrooms, and concessions. All stations had island platforms. The platforms had red no-slip concrete floors, curved concrete ceilings and I-beam steel columns. Unlike some of the more ornate subways in other cities, the walls along side the tracks in the stations were left as unfinished concrete rather than tiled. To aid in station identification, each station had a color scheme that was used in the accents like tile borders, platform column color, and signage lettering and background.

Milwaukee Elevated

What is now the Milwaukee Elevated -- the portion of the O'Hare branch of the Blue Line between Evergreen Portal south of Damen station and the Logan Square Portal north of California station -- actually represents a

remnant of the Metropolitan Elevated's Northwest branch.

The Metropolitan West Side Elevated Railroad Company -- more commonly referred to as 'the Met' -- built the Milwaukee Elevated in 1895 as part of its vast network of lines on the West and Northwest Sides. Northwest Side trains originally took a more circuitous route to and from downtown, predating the construction of the Milwaukee-Dearborn Subway. Heading outbound from the Loop, trains traversed the Met's four-track main line paralleling Van Buren Street to Marshfield Junction, where the four-track line split into three two-track branches. The Northwest branch headed due north parallel to Paulina Avenue to Milwaukee Avenue near around Evergreen Street, then turned northwest paralleling Milwaukee Avenue. The Northwest service continued northwest along Milwaukee to a terminal at Logan Square, near Kedzie and Logan Boulevard. Just beyond Robey (Damen) station, the branch split again, with Humboldt park service turning west along North Avenue to Lawndale. The portion of the Northwest branch along Milwaukee between Evergreen and Logan Square -- just over half of the original route's length -- is now what remains as the Milwaukee Elevated.

Work on the Northwest branch began in 1893. By mid-October 1894, the Northwest branch was complete as far north as Robey Street, with the branches diverging there to Logan Square and Humboldt Park proceeding rapidly. Service between Canal Street on the main line and Robey Street on the Northwest branch was inaugurated on May 6, 1895. Service was extended to the Logan Square terminal on May 25.



A six-car train of 6000-series units runs southbound on the Milwaukee Elevated at Leavitt Avenue on October 17, 1952 as part of an equipment transfer. The 6000s had served on the Logan Square route since delivery, but were transferred to the North-South Route in October 1952, replaced by steel 4000s. (Photo from the CTA Collection)

The station houses were built by the Jonathan Clark & Sons Company for the general contractor, Alfred Walcott, and were designed by the engineering staff of the Metropolitan company. Constructed of red pressed brick with stone sills and foundations, their vernacular style might best be described as Queen Anne-influenced with some Romanesque features. The stations' design was highlighted by a semicircular bay/portico, a lattice pattern in the brick cornice, and extensive terra cotta work. All of the stations had dual side platforms, with canopies and railings typical of all Met stations: Designed into the railings were larger cast iron square plates with a stylized diamond design. The stairs and platforms were constructed of wood on a steel structure. Each platform had a short canopy in the center of the platform, covering the stairs and a small waiting area. The canopy frame was iron, with arched latticed supports and bracketed rafters, and hipped roofs of corrugated tin.

Service continued on the Northwest (aka Logan Square) branch largely unchanged until the CTA era. On February 25, 1951, the Milwaukee-Dearborn Subway opened, connecting the Logan Square branch with downtown more directly. At this point, the north-south section of the old Northwest branch south of Evergreen became nonrevenue trackage known as the Paulina Connector.

Kennedy Extension: Kimball Subway

The first postwar expansion of the "L" system (that was not a line started before the war, a replacement for an existing line, or the resumption of a previous service) came in the form of two lines built in the medians of expressways, a form first pioneered in Chicago on the Congress Line (*see next section*). The Kennedy project was an extension of the Milwaukee Elevated on the Northwest Side. The Kennedy Line, constructed between 1967 and 1970, was the second of the of the two Kennedy and Dan Ryan projects to open. The two lines were under design and construction together, and although the Kennedy's end-to-end length is shorter than that of the Dan Ryan, it included more complicated and time-consuming subway construction.

The Kennedy Line extends 5.2 miles northwest of the Milwaukee Elevated at Sacramento Avenue and enters a new subway underneath Milwaukee Avenue. The subway turns north under Kimball Avenue (3400W) and crosses under the eastbound lanes of the John F. Kennedy Expressway at School Street (3300N). Here, the line ascends to the surface and continues northwest another four miles in the median of the Kennedy Expressway to the terminal at Jefferson Park (5400N).

Subway construction was carried out by the open cut method -- rather than the deep boring of the Milwaukee-Dearborn Subway -- in three main stages to minimize inconvenience to residents and businesses. The new \$50 million Kennedy extension opened for service on February 1, 1970. Coinciding with the start of operations, CTA bus routes serving the northwest section of the city and adjacent suburban communities are being revised

for maximum coordination of connecting service at each station.

The design of the six stations of the Kennedy extension was carried out by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill under the direction of Myron Goldsmith, who developed a modern, functional form in the late International style popular at the time. Improved visibility and security, ease of cleaning and more comfortable working conditions for CTA employees were design goals. Skidmore took the Kennedy-Dan Ryan ("KDR") project in a unique direction, designing all aspects of the new lines to harmonize in both shapes and materials. All windbreaks, dividers, and ticket booths were stainless steel. The formal and functional criteria were expressed in several ways: open, uncluttered, brightly lit interior spaces; durability, safety, maximum efficiency of movement; lightness and purity of structure. The shape of everything, from the buildings to the agents' booths, to the trashcans, followed together into a seamless design philosophy, which perfectly captured the boxy, purely functional International Modern style for which Skidmore is so well known.



When the Kennedy extension and Milwaukee-Kimball Subway opened in 1970, it was operated with a mix of purpose-built 2200-series cars (at left) and 6000-series PCC cars (at right). Here, a rush hour crowd alights at Belmont station on March 30, 1970. *(Photo from the CTA Collection)*

The two subway stations at Logan Square and Belmont were unique in design. The fare controls were at a mezzanine level, with entrances from multiple sides of the streets above. The mezzanines were not enclosed, as in the State and Dearborn subways, but were cantilevered over the platforms, and thus functioned more as an open deck overlooking the track level. The island platform at each station is spacious, with a concrete column-free platform obtained by using a box-girder construction. The walls of the station mezzanines and platform areas were off-white brick (since discolored to a tan hue), with white concrete coffered ceilings and fluorescent lights recessed in the coffers. Further down the platforms, the ceilings became arched concrete.

The stations' design even formed a harmony with the 150 rapid transit cars, the 2200-series units built by Budd, that were ordered to serve the new Kennedy and Dan Ryan lines, which used the same design philosophies and basic shapes, and an entirely new system of signage with a redesigned typeface and clean graphic style (still used by CTA today, in a modified form), making a fully integrated design throughout the entire project. Stations were spaced at between half-mile and one-mile intervals, reflecting an increasing spacing of stations prominent in the postwar period, with bus lines acting as feeders to the rapid transit line.

Congress Line

The Congress Line was the first new rapid transit route that both began and finished construction under the auspices of the CTA, although its construction was actually managed by the Chicago Department of Public Works. Opened June, 22 1958, the line pioneered a new, completely divergent philosophy of station (and indeed, route) design. The Congress Line -- or "West Side Subway," as it was also called in its early years -- was built to replace the 50+ year old Garfield Park elevated, whose removal was required by the construction of the Congress Superhighway (later called the Eisenhower Expressway, Interstate 290). The new, replacement line followed an innovative new concept: putting a rapid transit line in the center of an expressway. The reason for doing so was multi-fold. First, it was believed it would create a "transportation corridor," bringing both efficiency of land use and attracting the most commuters to multiple modes of transport. Second, there was a cost savings in putting the rapid transit line in the grade separated right-of-way of a multilane auto expressway: it increased carrying capacity of the corridor for relatively little cost. The cost distribution was one-fifth for transit facilities and four-fifths for the expressway -- effectively providing a cleared and graded right-of-way for the transit line without the line having to bear the cost -- providing "the maximum in passenger transport... for every dollar spent." The new right-of-way was also a straighter route protected with automatic block signals, providing a faster, safer ride.

The real increase in travel time, however, came in part with a new departure in station design for the Congress. The new stations, in terms of placement and frequency, represented a compromise between the historic concept of closely spaced stations found on the old Garfield Park branch, favored by aldermen, and widely spaced stations, coordinated with bus feeder routes, preferred by CTA planners anxious to improve transit service and system productivity. The more important stops were located between two streets approximately a quarter mile



Two 6000-series trains pass while undergoing testing of the Congress Line on October 9, 1957, eight and a half months before the line would open for service. Upon opening, only 6000s, the system's newest equipment, was regularly operated on the CTA's new showcase route. *(Photo from the CTA Collection)*

the expressway, which physically separated them from the

apart, but with station houses and access ramps from both streets. (More minor stations had access from only one street.) What this effectively did was to cut the number of station stops, speeding trains along the route by making fewer stops, while providing almost the same number of entrance points. The Garfield Park branch had 27 stations between the Loop and Desplaines before construction began; the Congress Line, on the other hand, had 24 station entrances, but only 14 station stops. This idea of beginning to space stations farther apart and allowing the bus system to service the areas in between and feed the rapid transit stations represented a new benchmark in station design philosophy and would drive CTA station design into the 21st century.

In terms of specific station layout and architectural design, the Congress stations made several departures from previous practice. Each platform, located in the median of the expressway, was 600 feet long (long enough, in theory, to accommodate a 12-car train) and covered by a canopy for its entire length. The stations were located in the middle of the street bridges over the communities they needed to serve.

Each street-level station entrance was identified by a large, animated, electrically illuminated sign, since removed from all Congress stations. The buildings were small compared to many older stations, about 42 feet long and 21 feet wide, and provided only the most minimal, necessary amenities. Exterior walls were a combination of colored glazed brick (alternating between three pastel colors – yellow, blue, and gray – from station to station) and structural glass blocks. Station entrance facades were a combination of aluminum panels, polished plate glass windows, and aluminum framed plate glass doors. The station exteriors were largely devoid of the type of ornamentation seen in the previous 50 years of station design, save perhaps for the door handles on all Congress stations, which were molded in the shape of the CTA logo.

The interiors were finished in glazed tile, also alternating between the line's three signature pastel colors, for ease of cleaning. The only amenities in the station house were those that related directly to station operations: no concessions, no payphones, and no public restrooms. Most of the interior was taken up with fare controls, which consisted of a two-window agent's booth, coin-operated transfer-issuing turnstiles, and high-barrier rotogates. The interesting aspect of the fare controls here is the way they were so specifically tailored to the varying needs of different operating conditions with a complex system of turnstiles, rotogates, metal and glass barriers, and swinging gates to allow the interior to be organized into several different configurations of the interior space for attended and unattended periods.

Recalling that the platform is set between two streets a quarter mile apart in many cases, there was a rather long distance that needed to be traversed between the station houses and the platforms in between. In nearly all cases on the Congress, this was achieved using long, enclosed ramps from the back of the station house to the end of the platform. Effectively, the passenger had to walk the distance of nearly a city block down this ramp to get from the station house to the platform, though the effect of this was somewhat nullified by the psychological "trick" of it being within the station facility, often causing this walking time to be omitted from the subconscious calculation of how long it takes to get to "the station." These ramps were originally fully enclosed by corrugated green glass panels alternated with ventilation louvers. This glass was later removed, effectively making the ramps open to the air and noise of the surrounding expressway.



The Keeler entrance to Pulaski station, seen on May 23, 1958 a month before entering service, was typical of the 1958 Congress Line station. Note the neon entrance sign and signature door handles. *(Photo from the Chicago Transit Authority Collection)*



5th Annual

Historic “L” Station Roster



LaSalle 1

Location: 150 W. Congress Parkway

Date in Service: 1951

Built By: Chicago Department of Subways
and Superhighways

Current Line: Blue Line (Milwaukee-Dearborn
Subway)



California 2

Location: 2211 N. California Avenue

Date in Service: 1895

Built By: Metropolitan West Side Elevated

Current Line: Blue Line (O'Hare branch/
Milwaukee Elevated)



Damen 3

Location: 1588 N. Damen Avenue

Date in Service: 1895

Built By: Metropolitan West Side Elevated

Current Line: Blue Line (O'Hare branch/
Milwaukee Elevated)



Belmont 4

Location: 3355 W. Belmont Avenue

Date in Service: 1970

Built By: Chicago Department of Public
Works

Current Line: Blue Line (O'Hare branch/
Milwaukee-Kimball Subway)



Central 5

Location: 800 S. Central Avenue

Date in Service: 1960

Date Closed: 1973

Built By: Chicago Department of Public Works

Current Line: *closed (located on Blue Line Congress branch)*



Racine 6

Location: 430 S. Racine Avenue (Racine ent.)
431 S. Loomis Avenue (Loomis ent.)

Date in Service: 1958

Built By: Chicago Department of Public Works

Current Line: Blue Line (Congress branch)

Interested in learning more about “L” architecture?

Join us for a lunchtime lecture at the Chicago Architecture Foundation!

What: “Elevating Architecture: A Century of ‘L’ Station Design Evolution”

Who: Graham Garfield, Chicago Transit Authority and Chicago-L.org

When: November 12. Lectures begin at 12:15 p.m. and last approx. 45 minutes

Lectures are free and are open to the public. No reservations are required. Guests are welcome to bring a bag lunch.

Please join us at The John Buck Lecture Hall just off the atrium lobby of the Santa Fe Building, 224 South Michigan Avenue.

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

All photos by Graham Garfield, except as follows: Photo of Central from the Scott Grieg Collection