Building Consensus for CTA’s Red Line South Reconstruction Project

How Community Involvement, Extensive Communications and Comprehensive Service Options Helped Make a Successful Project

Graham Garfield
CTA General Manager of Customer Information
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Overview

- Project scope and need
- Tools to build consensus
  - Comprehensive Service Options
  - Community Involvement
  - Extensive Communications
- Public Reaction
Project Need

• Line opened in 1969
• Last major track renewal occurred in the mid-1980s
• Crossovers replaced in 2004
• Tracks were beyond their expected lifespan
Project Need

- 30-40 percent of the branch was classified as slow zones
- In some cases, tracks that once supported speeds of up to 55mph were restricted to 15mph operation
- Wooden ties were dried, cracked, and rotted
- Limestone ballast was worn out, failing to properly drain water or keep the tracks secure
Project Scope

• $425 million project
• Renovate the tracks on the Red Line’s 43-year-old Dan Ryan branch
Project Scope

- Entire line between Cermak and 95th closed for five months
- Complete rebuild of the tracks, track bed and subsurface
Project Scope

• Installation of elevators at Garfield, 63rd and 87th stations
• Additional improvements to eight stations
Contractors

- Contract portion of the project budgeted at $259.4 million
- Split between two prime contractors:
  - Track Work:
    Kiewit Infrastructure Company, $215.6 million
  - Station Work:
    F.H. Paschen, S.N. Nielsen and Associates, $43.8 million.
Project Details

- New tracks utilize continuously welded rails
- 65,000 new oak railroad ties
- About 195,500 tons of old limestone ballast removed, replaced with new granite ballast
Project Details

- Closing line provides contractor with greater flexibility and efficiency
- Still, working in an incredibly tight space
- Tight timeframe requires each phase to be precisely choreographed and executed
- Work plan provided just 154 scheduled construction days
- Severe liquidated damaged if they finish late
• If weekend-only, the project would have lasted four years
• Shutting down the line completely allowed the work to be done in five months
• Complete shutdown allowed CTA to save $75 million, which was reinvested in the stations
Conflicting Community Messages

• Ambitious project with potential risk, both practically and politically.

• Project scope and approach represented a potentially conflicting set of messages:
  – significant investment in the South Side community with brand new railroad
  – decision to close the line to perform the work
Broad Outreach Plan

• Comprehensive Service Options
• Community Involvement
• Extensive Communications
Service Options to Minimize Impact

• Five-month closure a substantial challenge and inconvenience to riders

• Provided a number of convenient travel options to minimize the project’s impact as much as possible:
  – rerouted Red Line trains
  – a robust network of bus shuttles
  – extra bus service on the mainline network
  – discounted bus and train fares
Rail Service

- Red Line trains between Howard and Ashland/63rd via the State Street Subway
- Green Line between Harlem and Cottage Grove
- Free entry at Garfield elevated station
Rail Service
Bus Shuttles

- Shuttle buses from the four closed Dan Ryan stations to the Garfield station on the South Side elevated
  - Four express shuttles
  - Two limited stop shuttles
- Free express shuttle between the Roosevelt station and the closed Cermak-Chinatown station
Bus Shuttles

- Express bus shuttles designed to get customers from each Dan Ryan station south of 63rd Street to the as quickly as possible.
- A series of point-to-point non-stop shuttles rather than have one shuttle route that made multiple stops to minimize customer inconvenience.
- Exception: overnight, when ridership was low.
Bus Service

- North of 63rd, existing east-west arterial bus service connected with the South Side elevated
- Extra service on parallel bus routes
- 50¢ discount bus fare south of 63rd Street
- Cost of the extra and alternative service estimated to be approximately $13 million (more than 3 percent of the project budget)
Community Outreach

- Early backing of the project by local community and political leaders would help engender support – or at least acceptance
- Create a network of well-informed emissaries within the communities
- Not just politicians – heads of local community organizations, chambers of commerce, churches
Political Outreach

• CTA began reaching out to elected officials in 2012
• Briefed on the scope, goals, and timeframe for the project; detailed info on 5-month closure vs. four years of weekend closures
• Local aldermanic and congressional support
Community Hiring

• Some elected and community leaders were particularly concerned about community hiring
• CTA partnered with the Chicago Urban League
• Lack of opportunities in city contracts long been an issue in the African-American community
• A proactive approach from the beginning
Local Community Hiring and Benefit

• Promised 15 percent of jobs on the project set aside for local disadvantaged workers

• In addition to new city bus drivers hired from nearby neighborhoods
Local Community Hiring and Benefit

- Project generated around 1,500 jobs, including:
  - 1,000 construction jobs
  - 400+ part-time, permanent bus operators
  - 100 traffic control aides
DBE Requirements and Challenges

• CTA must meet federal DBE program requirements
• Historically, difficult for smaller, minority-owned construction firms to get work as prime contractor
• Some issues:
  – bonding requirements
  – administrative requirements/paperwork
  – networking
CTA DBE Outreach and Facilitation

• Worked to identify eligible South Side residents and contractors

• Urban League organized sessions where:
  – minority contractors and the major construction firms could familiarize themselves with one another
  – the minority contractors could acquaint themselves with subcontracting requirements

• sessions helped put local DBE firms in a better position to compete
CTA DBE Outreach and Facilitation

• ~2,600 people applied for a chance to work on the Red Line project.
• Shortened to 600 eligible applicants
• ~70 were hired to work on the project
• Benefits when beyond Red Line project:
  – over 100 others invited for two days of railroad construction training
  – skills they could use to find work on other railroad projects
  – gave Kiewitt a new pool of skills workers to tap for future projects
  – Others remain in the Urban League’s labor data bank, on-call for future projects.
• Both prime contractors met or exceeded CTA’s goal for DBE participation
• Hired 39 DBE subcontractors for a total of $82.5 million – 32% of the subcontracting work
• Approx. $54 million of that went to African-American owned firms.
• “there will be a strong African American presence from start to finish”
• “a model for others to follow”
CTA created an extensive assortment of public information about the project and its impacts.

Array of different collateral pieces

Used diverse network of methods to distribute the information

Sought to use every channel available to them to help get the word out
Flyers and Brochures

• General project flyer (English & Spanish)
• Provided general descriptions of project & basic info about service alternatives
• Stressed benefits of the project
• Helped contextualize the scale of need, make project relatable for the average person
Flyers and Brochures

- 12 community-specific alternative service brochures
- Provided directions and alternate service options complete with a map depicting how service would look after the project started
- Tailored to specific neighborhoods grouped into 12 zones
- Brochures for the two zones in and near Chinatown were translated into Chinese
Project Website

• Created a special website for the project, redlinesouth.com

• Clearinghouse for project info: scope, service, jobs, art, and more
Trip Planner

• Special online trip planner
• Allowed customers to virtually try out different alternates and options without needing to consult multiple maps, timetables, and brochures
• Provided information on multiple transit-route options, including travel-time estimates.
Social Media

- Updates, photos posted to Facebook, Flickr
- Information, updates posted to regular Twitter feed – @cta
- Special feed also created – @redlinesouth
- Service alerts email and text message subscription
Going Out Into the Community

- Deployed “Red Line South Ambassadors” to answer customer questions & provide project, travel info
- Zone-based “door hangers” placed on doors of homes and businesses in project area
- Like the fliers, the door hangers provided alternative transit service suggestions
Additional Outreach Channels

• Also employed more typical methods of information dissemination:
  – print and online media
  – car card ads onboard trains
  – ads in local newspapers
  – graphics on digital advertising screens and on posters in the rail stations
  – even arranged to have materials sent home with kids’ report cards

• Leaflet for Green Line riders
Extensive Signage Changes

- Extensive informational and wayfinding signage system developed and implemented
- Helped guide customers during the service changes associated with the project
- Changes to rail line routings
- Extensive bus shuttle network
- Transfers between buses, shuttles and trains
- Customers using unfamiliar stations and new services
New Train Signs

• New roller curtains were ordered for Red Line trains with an “Ashland/63” reading on a red background
• New readings programmed into the 5000-series cars
Maps Onboard Trains, at Stations

- Maps throughout the system were replaced, including
  - onboard trains
  - at rail stations
  - in bus shelters across the city
Signage at Closed Dan Ryan Stations

• Each closed station had a system of signage to inform customers of their service alternatives

• Front of each shuttered station:
  – project poster, describing the renovation project
  – alternate service poster listing options for getting to Downtown and South Side destinations and a local area map
Signage at Closed Dan Ryan Stations

- “Breadcrumb” signs along path from the closed stations to the nearby bus stops
- Distinctive red project-branded flags to help passengers identify the shuttle stops
Signage at Other Red, Green Line Stations

• Most complex station was Garfield:
  – now had multiple entrances/exits and bus terminal with nearly half a dozen shuttle routes.
  – Extensive wayfinding system to guide customers between the shuttles, local buses, park & ride lot, station entrances, and platforms.
Signage at Other Red, Green Line Stations

• The rest of the Red and Green lines:
  – “95th/Dan Ryan” changed to “Ashland/63rd” on Red Line station directional signs
  – “Ashland/63rd” blocked out on Green Line signs.
  – Other signs updated with temporary decals that could be easily removed at the end of project
Extra Personnel for Customer Information

• Large numbers of extra personnel wearing bright orange-and-yellow CTA safety vests out on the first day of the reroute and for several days thereafter to provide customer assistance

• Both field Operations staff as well as general office and Operations management personnel
Outcome and Reaction

• Dan Ryan branch reopened on October 20, 2013, on-time and on-budget
• Tracks upgraded to full speed upon reopening, zero slow zones
• Up to 10 minutes faster each way between 95th and downtown
Outcome and Reaction

• “I saved a lot of money using the free service, and it was just as fast as the (old) Red Line.”
• “The shuttle buses ended up being kind of convenient during the construction… I saved some money from the shuttle buses…”
• “It’s been very organized… As far as the shuttle, I thought I was going to have a problem with that, but it worked out very well. ... The bus worked out better for me. I got spoiled.”
• “Originally, I didn’t think it would be a good idea. I was going to start driving to work. ... I thought it was unfair. After a couple of months dealing with the shuttle, it went really smoothly.”