

Robbins, IL



Pedestrian Access Improvement Plan

August 2012



Robbins Metra Station

The **Robbins** station is located on Metra's Rock Island District Line in Robbins, IL, 17 miles southwest of Chicago's LaSalle Street Station (the line's eastern terminus). The Station is located at the northeast corner of 139th Street and Utica Avenue.

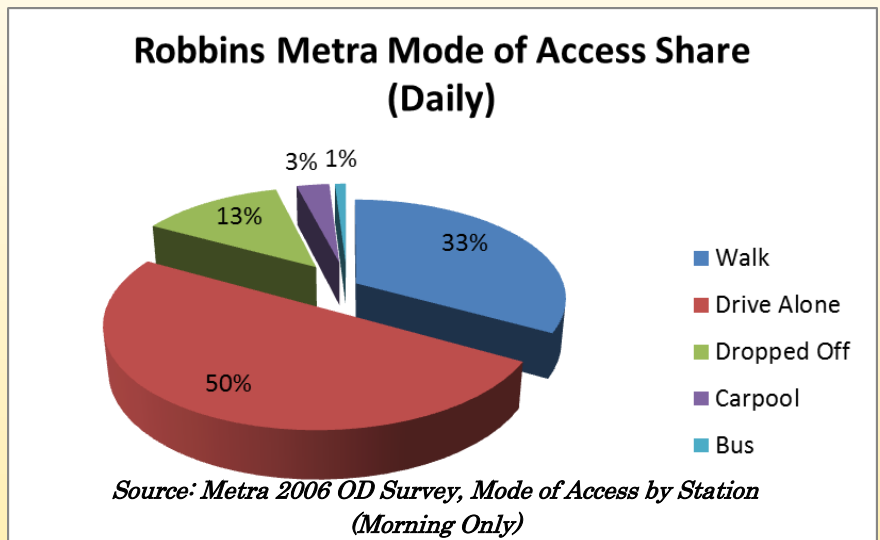
Although a designated "flag stop" (trains only stop to discharge passengers on notice to conductor and pick up passengers on station platforms visible to engineers.) during certain times of the day, there are a total of 38 commuter trains that serve the station each weekday with 152 total daily boardings (*Metra 2006 Boardings and Alighting Counts*).

As shown on the adjacent graph, commuters access the station via various modes. Driving is listed as the most popular mode of access, with walking second at 33%. This is well above the system average of 21% (RTA Report- *Access & Parking Strategies for TOD, 2011*).

Working Group

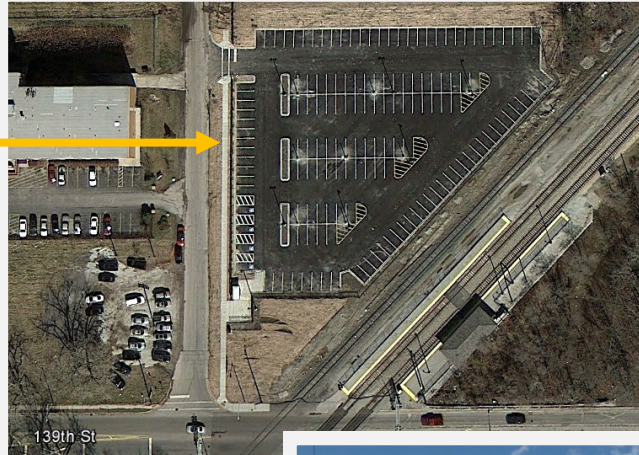
- Regional Transportation Authority
- Village of Robbins
- City of Blue Island
- Metra Commuter Rail
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Cook County Highway Department
- Illinois Commerce Commission
- Active Transportation Alliance

The Village of Robbins requested the assistance of the RTA to assess various commuter, pedestrian and access-related issues in and around the Robbins Metra Station area. In response, the RTA organized a half-day meeting with the Village of Robbins, City of Blue Island, Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC), Cook County Highway Department, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Metra and the Active Transportation Alliance (ATA) to discuss these issues and recommend potential solutions. The following report summarizes the recommendations derived from this meeting and can be used as a guide for the Village to pursue funding for these improvements.



On June 13, 2012 the Village celebrated the opening of a newly-paved, 152-space commuter parking lot complete with bike racks accommodating 5 bikes.

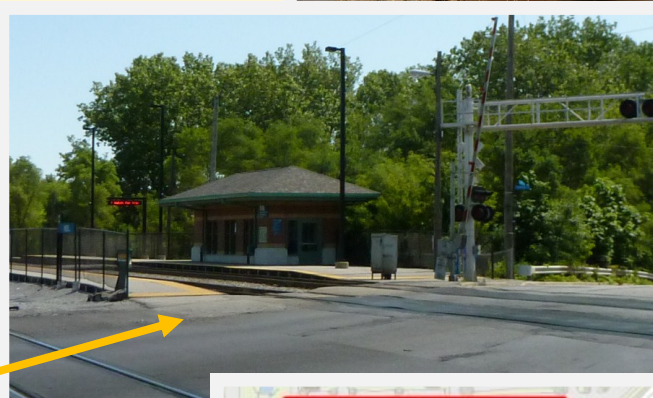
Recent Station Area Improvements



A senior living facility was constructed in 2003-2004 just west of the Metra station on the north side of 139th Street.



The **Robbins Metra Station Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Study** was funded by the RTA and completed in July 2002 and in the same year the Village was awarded \$247,827 from the Transportation, Community and System Preservation (TCSP) grant program to construct a new station house. The station, along with new platforms, was completed in 2006. More information on this program can be found in the back of this report.



Currently a 90-acre TOD project is planned for the southeast corner of 139th and Kedzie. The development will include residential, commercial and civic uses and open space. The first phase is a 70-unit family townhouse development flanking 139th Street within walking distance of the Robbins Metra Station.



Station Area Observations & Recommendations

The following observations were discussed during the meeting with the Village of Robbins, City of Blue Island, RTA, Cook County Highway Department, ICC, CMAP, Metra and ATA. Where appropriate, the numbered recommendations correspond to aerial photographs on the following pages.

Station & Platforms

1. The Village may consider working with Metra to enhance the station and platform area with benches, bike racks and additional lighting.
2. Eliminate mid-block crossing. This crossing is currently not ADA accessible. Eliminating this crossing option will divert commuters to cross the tracks at 139th Street.
3. The Village may consider (in the longer-term, depending on future funding availability) exploring ways to pave more of the sidewalk near the grade crossing to create a larger area for commuters waiting to cross the tracks at 139th.
4. Wayfinding and signage can be improved in and around the station area to:
 - Denote commuter parking
 - Provide guidance to safe pathways for crossing the tracks (including “No Trespassing” and “Private Property”) signage along the tracks and crossing to prevent crossing outside of designated crossings.

Pedestrian & Commuter Recommendations

5. Paint/Repaint crosswalks at all corners. (See aerial map at the bottom of the following page)
6. The Village could consider installing a pedestrian diversion (such as a fence) at the platform and crossing on the east side (inbound side) of the railroad tracks at 139th Street. This would guide commuters away from the edge of the platform and behind the crossing gate.
7. Improve the railroad crossing. The current condition of the crossing is worn and uneven; laying new material will create a more even, skid-proof surface, which creates a safer pathway across the railroad tracks for pedestrians and commuters. Metra plans to do routine replacement of the 139th Street at-grade crossing in the next couple of years (estimate). Routine replacement would include replacing the current design in kind. Metra does not have any funding for any deviations from the current design, thus these upgrades would need future coordination and funding
8. Install delineators along 139th Street at the railroad crossing to separate pedestrians and commuters from automotive traffic crossing the tracks. The Village may also consider striping the pedestrian pathway with paint as well. A longer-term solution, depending on funding availability, could include a pedestrian crossing gate at the sidewalk to provide additional safety measures.



Example of delineators separating commuters from traffic

#4 Work with Metra and CSX to install “No Trespassing”, “Private Property”, etc signs along the railroad tracks to deter pedestrians from crossing illegally and unsafely.

#2 Remove mid-block crossing

#1 Add benches, lighting and garbage cans to waiting area by station

#8 Install delineators to separate commuters from cars along 139th St.

#3,6 Consider paving more of the platform area to create a larger area for commuters waiting to cross the tracks. Additionally, a pedestrian diversion would guide commuters to a safe pathway across the tracks.

#7
Work with Metra and Cook County to improve the crossing at 139th St. to a more even surface

#9 Consider installing a “porkchop” at 139th St. & Coopers Grove Rd. to calm turning traffic and provide a pedestrian island. Alternatively, extending the western curb to narrow Coopers Grove would calm traffic.

Not To Scale

Station Area Observations & Recommendations (cont'd)

Traffic Calming

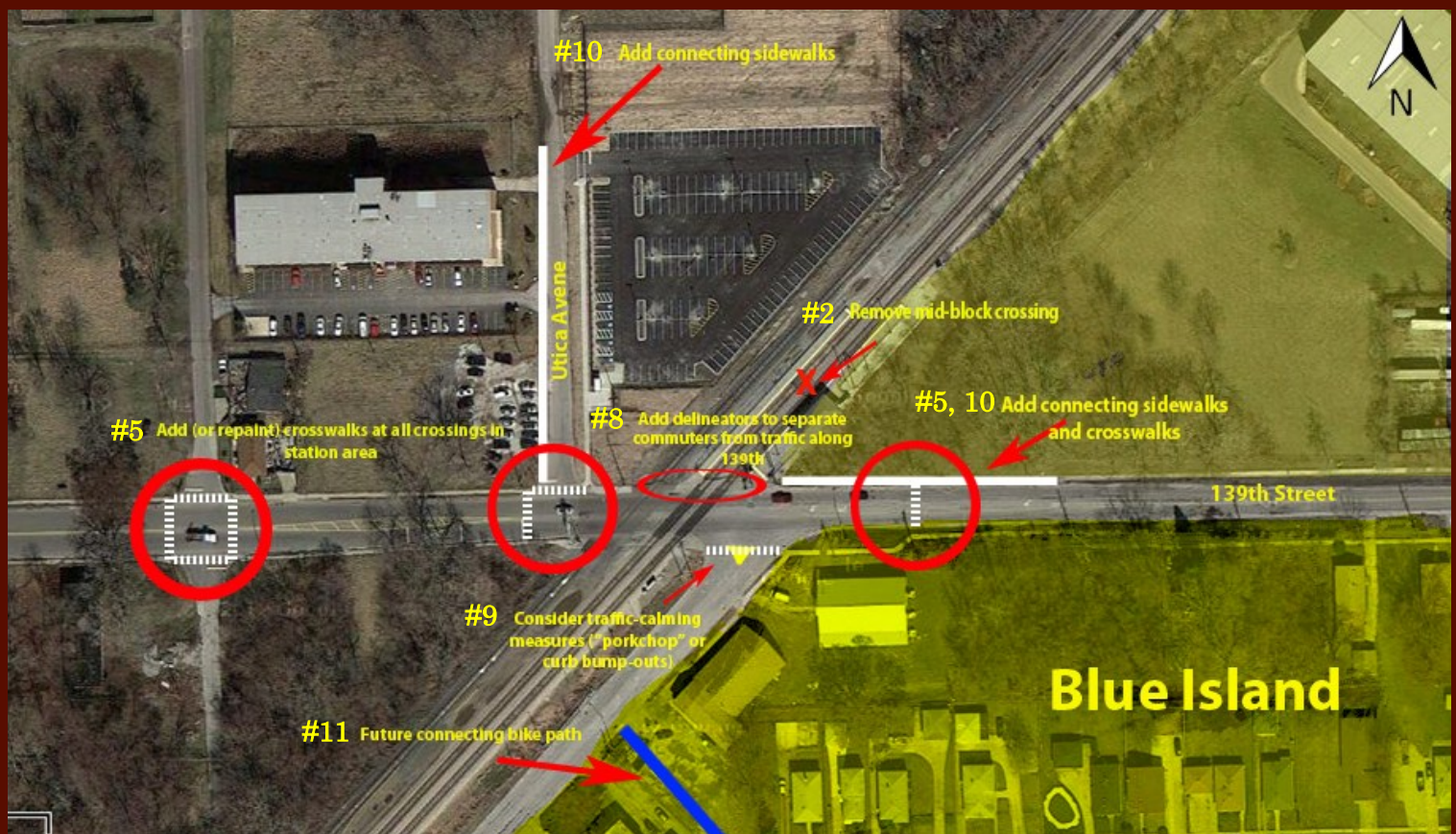
9. A pedestrian refuge or “porkchop” may be considered at the intersection of 139th Street and Coopers Grove Road. Separating the traffic turning onto Coopers Grove and onto 139th will calm traffic, provide a tighter turning radius for cars, and provide a safer pedestrian atmosphere. This improvement may require further investigation, engineering and funding from outside sources. Alternatively, the Village may consider narrowing Coopers Grove by relocating the curb on the west side of the street to shorten the crossing distance and to pull drivers further away from the rail crossing. This would eliminate the need for a porkchop island, which can sometimes complicate snow removal.

Sidewalk Connections (ADA Compliance Required)

10. An improved sidewalk is needed along the south side of 139th Street west of the tracks, and along the north side of 139th Street east of the tracks. This location may require additional engineering as the sidewalk abuts a ravine. Additionally, an improved sidewalk should be considered along the west side of Utica Avenue by the senior living facility. This type of improvement may require the Village to seek outside funding sources, engineering plans and Cook County approval due to the County’s ownership of 139th Street. It is recommended that the Village work closely with the Cook County Highway Department to improve all sidewalks along 139th Street, and add sidewalk guards/barriers where appropriate.

Bike Path Connections

11. The Active Transportation Alliance is currently evaluating opportunities for bike path connections along the Rock Island District line. There may be future opportunities to connect bike paths throughout the Village, especially at locations east of the railroad tracks in the Blue Island portion of the TOD area. The Village may consider monitoring bike parking usage and increase the amount of bike racks as needed. A longer-term improvement would be to apply a “road diet” (narrowing of auto lanes) along 139th Street to include bike lanes. The Village will need to work with the Cook County Highway Department and ATA on this effort.



Metra Rail Safety Programs

The Village may consider working with Metra to increase safety awareness and education through Metra's various safety programs listed below.

Safety Education

The classroom setting is just one way Metra's Operation Lifesaver program reaches the public. Metra's Operation Lifesaver teams – made up of presenters, representatives of Metra's Safety Department and Metra police officers – carry out about 50 "safety blitzes" each year at stations throughout the Metra system.

During the morning rush hour, an abbreviated version of the Operation Lifesaver rail safety education program is presented to commuters. Team members personally engage commuters in conversation, offering them a rail safety brochure and a small giveaway item embossed with a safety message, reinforcing safe behaviors on and around railroad crossings.

Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver is a national rail safety education program designed to promote railroad safety and awareness for children and adults. Metra has two Operation Lifesaver presenters whose job is to educate the public about the dangers of disobeying grade crossing warning devices and trespassing along the railroad right-of-way.

Metra's Operation Lifesaver presenters travel throughout Metra's six-county service area, delivering information to schools (grades Pre-K through 12), bus companies, public utility companies, police and fire departments and trucking companies. They perform about 950 Operation Lifesaver presentations annually, coordinating Metra's program with that of other large railroads as well as the State of Illinois.

The presenters use slideshows, brochures and pamphlets in the classroom to detail common causes of crossing accidents; provide professional driver safety tips; and outline grade crossing and right-of-way safety tips and statistical information.

Safety Blitzes

Metra conducts other rail safety blitzes throughout the six-county service area at the request of various community organizations. Metra's Operation Lifesaver presenters set up rail safety educational displays and host guest speakers to discuss railroad safety with the public. Some examples of those rail safety blitzes include law enforcement and train safety presentations; police, fire, and local government open-house displays, i.e., National Night Out; back-to-school fairs; health fairs; and state and county fairs.

To schedule a presentation, or to find out more, contact Larry Green at Metra (312) 735-9735 or visit: http://metrarail.com/metra/en/home/utility_landing/riding_metra/rail_safety_security/metra_rail_safetyprograms.html

Potential Funding Sources

The Village may consider exploring the following grant opportunities to fund various recommended improvements at the Robbins Metra Station.

Transportation, Community and System Preservation (TCSP)

www.fhwa.dot.gov/tcsp/

The Transportation, Community and System Preservation (TCSP) Program is a comprehensive initiative of research and grants to investigate the relationships between transportation, community, and system preservation plans and practices and identify private sector-based initiatives to improve such relationships. Eligible projects could be:

- Improved wayfinding and signage programs
- Sidewalk and pedestrian connection improvements
- Bike path connections

ICC Grade Crossing Protection Fund Program

www.icc.illinois.gov/railroad/CrossingSafetyImprovement.aspx

The GCPF, appropriated to IDOT but administered by the ICC, assists local jurisdictions in paying for safety improvements at highway-railroad crossings on local roads and streets. The GCPF is typically used to help pay for the following types of projects:

- Warning Device Upgrades
- Grade Separations - New and Reconstructed:
- Pedestrian Grade Separations
- Crossing Closures

Surface Transportation Program (STP)

www.cmap.illinois.gov/council-of-mayors/stp-resources

The regional Surface Transportation Program is a federal transportation program administered through CMAP and IDOT. The STP may be used to finance improvements to the surface transportation system. The funds can be used to improve eligible arterial and collector streets or Transportation Control Measure (TCM) projects. Examples of TCM projects may include pedestrian or bicycle improvements, commuter parking, transit improvements, capital expenditures, and intelligent transportation systems (ITS) projects.

Local Rail-Highway Crossing Safety Program

<http://safety.fhwa.dog.gov/xings/>

Federal safety funds are available through IDOT's Central Bureau of Local Roads. The Village could at any time submit for the installation of pedestrian warning gates. While there is no guarantee that the project will be selected, Metra may consider providing a cost estimate to allow the Village to apply.

Specific information on the crossing in Robbins can be found here:

<http://www.icc.illinois.gov/railroad/crossing.aspx?dotId=608939D&county=C031&s=O&city=4920>