

Introduction

1

SECTION

Romeoville's strategy to continue implementing its Downtown Master Plan and establish a linkage to its historic beginnings on the east side of the Des Plaines River is vital to enhancing the community's identity, creating a sense of place, augmenting the tax base, and establishing long-term sustainable growth and development of the community. This can be accomplished by providing access to a multimodal transportation network that enhances accessibility for all citizens.

Improved transit facilities will not only provide for access to local travel markets, but will also help connect Village residents to employment opportunities in Chicago and the region and connect the Village's largest employers with workers from other areas. This results in reducing congestion on local roads and the need for long commutes. In addition, connecting the proposed Metra site to the Village's existing

Pace bus routes and local paratransit modes is a key component of a successful transit system.

This planning process focuses on two distinct focus areas: Downtown Romeoville and the Village's East Side, which contains the proposed Metra site. The former will mostly focus on revitalization strategies; the latter will focus on crafting a land use plan that seeks to capitalize on proximity to the proposed Metra station. While each focus area is characterized by its own set of issues and opportunities, they do share a common objective to create linkages to each other and to the region through the development of a strong multimodal transportation network.

And, just as Downtown Romeoville originally evolved into a non-traditional downtown with the intent to move towards a more traditional form, the potential TOD that will



Source: Testa Associates, Inc.

The Canadian National (CN) Railroad runs north to south through the Study Area, creating the opportunity for a new Metra commuter rail station in Romeoville and the potential for transit-oriented development.

The downtown and TOD focus areas share a common opportunity to create linkages through the development of a strong multimodal transportation network.

be explored for the East Side will also stray from traditional norms. Ultimately, the TOD in Romeoville will derive its distinction and success from the linkages it will make to connect employees to jobs, customers to businesses, residents to diverse housing options, explorers to trails, and travelers to the region.

In addition to presenting an opportunity to establish transit facilities and transit-oriented development, the East Side Plan also opens the opportunity for Romeoville to advance itself as a pioneer in TOD design and change the way people view TOD's as a vital catalyst in forging connections within the community and beyond.

Study Area

As depicted in the aerial base maps in Figures 1-1 through 1-3, the overall Study Area is comprised of the following two focus areas: (1) the Downtown Area; and (2) the East Side TOD Area. One of the primary objectives of the East Side Plan is to link the two areas together by building up Romeoville's multi-modal transportation network and enhancing the identities of the two areas through streetscape design, enhanced signage, and physical improvements.

The overall Study Area, which is outlined by the yellow dashed line in Figure 1-1, generally lies within the following boundaries: 127th Street and Normantown Road on the north; Fenton Avenue and Troxel Avenue on the west; Taylor Road and 143rd Street on the south; and Smith Road on the east. The segment of Smith Road running north of 135th Street is the county line between Will and Cook Counties.

Each focus area is described below.



Located along IL Route 53, Downtown Romeoville has a current site layout and streetscape character that is more representative of a suburban retail strip center than a traditional downtown.



This eastward view towards the 135th Street/New Avenue intersection illustrates the dense tree coverage that forms a natural buffer between the CITGO refinery and the East Side TOD Area.

Source: Tesla Associates, Inc.

Downtown Area

The Downtown Area is located at the northwest section of the overall Study Area. Downtown Romeoville is generally bounded by Normantown Road to the north, Dalhart Avenue to the west, Alexander Circle to the south, and IL Route 53 to the east. Parcels along the outer perimeter of these general boundaries may also be considered to allow for linkages and continuity in redevelopment concepts.

The Downtown Area is depicted in Figure 1-2.

East Side TOD Area

The East Side TOD Area is generally located east of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to Smith Road, extending north to the Village's FPA boundary and south to 143rd Street. The future Metra site is part of this area. The TOD area will center around the proposed Metra station site. In addition, the TOD area will assess adjacent properties – including the historic Romeo town settlement, Big Run Golf Club, and other

vacant/undeveloped parcels towards Smith Road and 143rd Street – to determine how they can be enhanced or redeveloped to tie into the TOD concept.

Care will be taken to preserve any existing uses that are viable and lend unique character to the area, including historic structures within the original Romeo settlement, the existing Old Orchard neighborhood, and the equestrian facility along 143rd Street. If redevelopment is viable for the Big Run Golf Club, it may continue to be partially maintained as a golf facility.

The East Side TOD Area is depicted in Figure 1-3.

Future Metra Station Site

The Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line runs along the CN Railroad. The Village is collaborating with Metra to develop plans to establish a new Metra station along the west side of the railroad and south of 135th Street. This future Metra



The overall Study Area covers a broad portion of the Village of Romeoville. On the aerial map below, Downtown Romeoville (marked by a blue star) is located at the top left corner at the southwest corner of IL Route 53 and Normantown Road. The East Side of the Village is located along the 135th Street / Romeo Road corridor, generally west of the Des Plaines River to Smith Road. The proposed site for the planned Metra commuter rail station is located along the Canadian National Railroad (marked by a red star). See Figure 1-2 and Figure 1-3 for closer views of Downtown Romeoville and the East Side, respectively.

FIGURE 1-1
Study Area | OVERALL



The Downtown area is generally bounded by Normantown Road to the north, IL Route 53 to the east, Alexander Circle to the south, and Dalhart Avenue to the west. Residential neighborhoods border the north, west, and south. Other commercial uses are to the east.

FIGURE 1-2
Study Area | DOWNTOWN AREA



The East Side of Romeoville generally runs along the 135th Street / Romeo Road corridor, extending east to Smith Road, north to the Village's FPA boundary, and south to 143rd Street. The proposed site for the planned Metra commuter rail station is located along the Canadian National Railroad.

FIGURE 1-3

Study Area | EAST SIDE TOD AREA

station would be located south of the existing Lemont station and north of the existing Lockport station along the Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line.

Metra will construct platforms at this station, while the Village will build the station, pedestrian bridge, and a commuter parking lot on the site.

Planning Process

Throughout the duration of the planning process, a Steering Committee, generally comprised of Village staff, public officials, and representatives from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), Metra, and Pace, will provide guidance and feedback for each component of the scope of work. These components include:

- (1) Existing Conditions Assessment
- (2) Market Study
- (3) Transportation Improvement Plan
- (4) Concept Plans
- (5) Signage Plan
- (6) Design Guidelines
- (7) Implementation Plan

To ensure that the final draft of the East Side Plan has a broad level of support and understanding, the planning process includes an extensive public participation component designed to involve community stakeholders in crafting a plan that represents a vision for the Study Area that is responsive to the goals and aspirations of Romeoville residents, businesses, and property owners. The public participation process will include the following elements.

Community Survey

A community survey was administered to the community at the start of the planning process to gather feedback relating to a variety of topics, including land use, transit, and economic development. The survey was designed to be both web- and paper-based to enable a broader reach of the community. The survey results, which are summarized in Appendix A (to be provided; survey in progress), will be considered during the concept development phase.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

In-person interviews were conducted on July 7 and 21, 2011, with various community stakeholders to share and discuss insights and ideas relating to the Study Area and visions for how they would like the area to be planned. A summary of interviews, which is provided in Appendix B, will be considered during the concept development phase.

Community Workshop

A community workshop will invite community members to actively participate in a dynamic session designed to obtain input into the planning process via a series of interactive activities. The objective of the workshop will be to encourage community members to brainstorm creative ideas for the TOD area.

Public Open House

Public open houses will provide an informal public review process for community members to review the draft concept plan alternatives, share feedback on each alternative, and state their preferences for a preferred concept. Two open houses will be planned.



Linked to the existing Village of Romeoville website, the project website provides the Village with a variety of content relating to the planning process, including: draft documents, presentations, calendar of key dates, links to relevant resources, and a means to provide feedback.

Project Website

A project website provides an online resource and forum to keep the public informed and engaged in the planning process. The website enables community members to view documents, provide feedback, access the community survey, find online resources, and view a schedule of meetings and key dates.

Website: www.TeskaAssociates.com/Romeoville

Downtown Redevelopment Efforts

Lacking a traditional downtown, Romeoville established a 40-acre site along IL Route 53 in the mid 1960's. While Downtown Romeoville has been home to a variety of commercial uses and small businesses over the past 40+ years, it has experienced its share of vacancies and also includes some land that has remained undeveloped. With the large

Downtown revitalization strategies will strike an appropriate balance between meeting past ambitions and integrating more practical visions.



Although some smaller downtown businesses provide goods and services, large vacant units and undeveloped parcels are two indicators of the need for reinvestment and revitalization of Downtown Romeoville.

building setbacks and expansive parking areas, the character of Downtown Romeoville has grown to resemble an aging retail strip center rather than a compact pedestrian-friendly mixed use district like most traditional downtowns.

To help preserve and revitalize Downtown Romeoville as a core place within the Village, the Downtown Romeoville Redevelopment Commission (DRRC) formed as a group of concerned business people, property owners, residents, and Village officials.

In 2003, the Village and DRRC prepared a Downtown Master Plan to help guide the evolution of the downtown from its present under-utilized state to a more traditional downtown setting with a mix of retail, office, civic, and public uses in a pedestrian-friendly environment. While the Downtown Master Plan was developed several years ago before the downturn in the economy, it remains to be seen whether



Despite the expansive parking lots and auto-oriented site layout, Downtown Romeoville does have a few attractive pedestrian paths along the streetscape, including this one along Normantown Road.

or not the town center concept envisioned for Downtown Romeoville is still viable and will come to fruition.

It is the intent of this planning process to assess present and anticipated market conditions to determine the optimal revitalization strategies for Downtown Romeoville. Revitalization strategies will honor past recommendations wherever feasible, as well as explore alternative concepts to strike an appropriate balance between past ambitions and more practical visions.

Need for Transit in Romeoville

The community's desire to establish a new Metra station and expanded transit service in Romeoville has been well documented as far back as the Village's 2003 Comprehensive Plan and perhaps in general discussions even further back. While growth and development have slowed in re-



Starting in the 1960's, Downtown Romeoville developed over time with much of the development occurring close to IL Route 53. However, a few interior parcels remain undeveloped and provide opportunities.

cent years locally, regionally, and nationally, the need for expanded transit service in Romeoville trended the other way and has picked up steam, most notably with preliminary concept plans for different aspects of the proposed Metra site starting to materialize in 2010.

Regardless of when the economy will completely rebound and trend towards greater development capacity, the need for expanded transit service in Romeoville will continue to garner interest and move closer to establishing full-fledged plans for a new Metra station and associated expansion of Pace bus service. Even as gas prices soar, road congestion does not seem to be waning. However, establishing commuter rail service and expanded bus service would offer commuters more transportation options to get to where they need to be more quickly and less expensively. In addition to saving time and money, a new transit facility would also create a node around which to concentrate new devel-

opment that directly benefit from proximity to new commuter rail and expanded bus services.

The Romeoville East Side Plan aims to take the proper steps to not only reduce road congestion and build up a more complete multi-modal transportation network, but also create a healthier community by providing opportunities for safer and more efficient pedestrian and bicycle linkages.

Existing Transit Service via Metra & Pace

Presently, Romeoville has limited public transportation options available. Relative to the Study Area, the only transit options are Pace Bus Routes 834 and 855, which both run along IL Route 53. Pace Bus Route 834 provides service to Metra stations in Lockport to the south and Downers Grove to the north, as well as Park-n-Ride lots in Romeoville (at



Source: Lisle Area Chamber of Commerce

Based on proximity and findings from the Community Survey, Romeoville residents currently access Metra commuter rail service as close as Lemont and Lockport and as far as Naperville, Lisle, and Downers Grove.

FIGURE 1-4
Distance to Nearest Metra Stations

Miles*	Metra Station	Metra Line
3.8	Lemont	Heritage Corridor
4.0	Lockport	Heritage Corridor
10.3	Joliet	HC / Rock Island
12.6	Downers Grove	BNSF
13.4	Naperville	BNSF
13.4	Lisle	BNSF
14.0	Belmont	BNSF
16.6	Route 59	BNSF

*Mileage approximate, as measured from the intersection of 135th Street and New Avenue.

Source: MapQuest.

Spartans' Square) and Bolingbrook. Pace Bus Route 855 is a non-stop express bus providing part-time service to the Park-n-Ride lot at Spartans Square in Romeoville, as well as other park-and-ride lots in Bolingbrook, Plainfield, and Burr Ridge. However, Route 855 does not directly access any nearby Metra stations. Average weekday bus ridership for Routes 834 and 855 is 841 and 266 riders, respectively.¹

Pace Bus Route 755 is the third bus line serving Romeoville, with service along I-55 between Plainfield and the Illinois Medical District in Chicago. Route 755 does not presently serve the Study Area.

1 Source: RTAMS, Ridership Statistics, Pace Bus Route Detail, June 2011.

FIGURE 1-5
Weekday Boardings - Metra Heritage Corridor Line

Metra Station	1999	2002	*2006
Joliet	253	313	395
Lockport	201	303	552
Lemont	341	407	381
Willow Springs	82	142	97
Summit	66	79	64
Glenn	-	-	-
Brighton Park	-	-	-
Halsted	-	-	-
Union Station	905	1,180	1,421

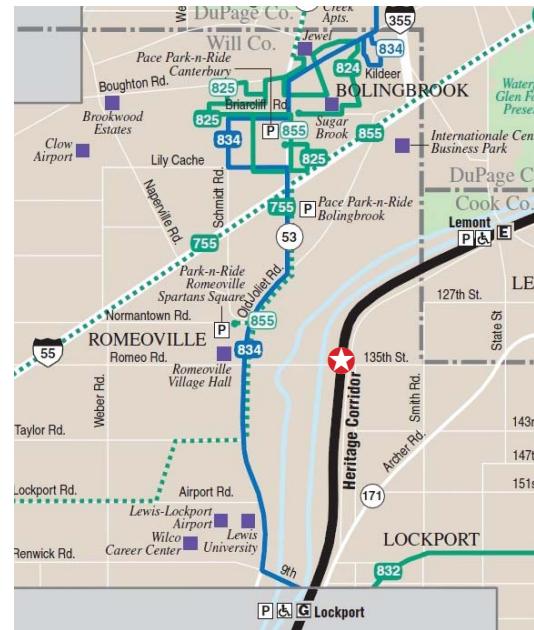
*Most current data available; new data survey is expected to be conducted in Fall 2012.

Source: Metra.

The table in Figure 1-4 lists approximate mileage to the nearest Metra stations and park-and-ride lots in the vicinity, relative to the proposed location of the future Metra station in Romeoville at the southwest corner of 135th Street and the CN Railroad/New Avenue. Based on weekday boardings over time² (see Figure 1-5), the Metra stations at Lockport and Lemont are the second and fourth busiest stations, respectively, along the Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line. This reinforces the potential to add a new Metra station in Romeoville to help redistribute rail passengers and alleviate crowdedness at park-and-ride lots and commuter parking

² Data based on 2006 counts provided by Metra; more current data is presently being tabulated but is unavailable at this time.

FIGURE 1-6
RTA System Map for the Romeoville Area



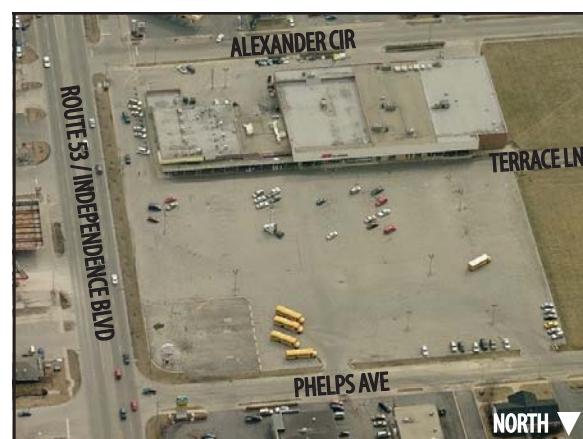
Source: Regional Transportation Authority.

lots at the Lockport and Lemont stations.

The map in Figure 1-6 shows all Metra commuter rail lines and Pace bus routes in the greater region around Romeoville. The red star indicates the proposed location of the future Metra station in Romeoville along the Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line, which is marked by the solid black line. Aside from the area along IL Route 53, the various colored lines that symbolize an integrated network of bus routes are noticeably sparse throughout Romeoville, particularly its East Side, which would include the proposed Metra station and TOD area. This scarcity of bus service and the present lack of commuter rail service signify a limited public transit system in Romeoville.

Park-n-Ride Lot at Spartans' Square

Located in Downtown Romeoville, the Park-n-Ride lot at Spartans' Square, which is a large multi-tenant retail cen-



The Spartans' Square parking lot serves as a Park-n-Ride commuter lot with bus service from Pace Bus Route 855. Other nearby Park-n-Ride commuter lots are located in Bolingbrook, Plainfield, and Burr Ridge.

ter along the west side of IL Route 53, offers bus access to nearby Metra commuter rail stations. The Park-n-Ride lot presently utilizes the expansive parking lot that serves Spartans' Square. However, since some of the units within Spartans' Square are vacant, and given the sheer size of the parking lot, plenty of parking spaces are available for commuters who wish to access the Park-n-Ride service provided by Pace Bus Route 855.

Dial-A-Ride Paratransit Service

In addition to the fixed bus routes provided by Pace, Romeoville is served by other public transportation options. First Transit, a national paratransit service operator, runs two Dial-A-Ride paratransit programs sponsored by Central Will and DuPage Township. The DuPage Township Dial-A-Ride program serves Romeoville riders north of 135th Street, while the Central Will program serves rides to the south. Both services are open only to seniors and disabled riders.



The Village's Ride Around Town program offers Romeoville residents with paratransit service for various types of trips. Other Dial-A-Ride paratransit programs are provided by Central Will and DuPage Townships.

FIGURE 1-7
Means of Transportation to Work

Mean	#	%
Car, Truck, or Van	15,944	89.9%
- Drove Alone	14,092	79.4%
- Carpooled	1,852	10.4%
Public Transportation	420	2.4%
- Bus or trolley bus	100	0.6%
- Streetcar or trolley car	32	0.2%
- Subway or elevated train	19	0.1%
- Railroad	269	1.5%
- Ferryboat	0	0.0%
Taxicab	8	0.0%
Motorcycle	0	0.0%
Biked	0	0.0%
Walked	483	2.7%
Other Means	334	1.9%
Worked at Home	555	3.1%
TOTAL	17,744	100.0%

Additional Notes

A majority (80.9%) of all workers who carpooled to work participated in a 2-person carpool.

About two-thirds (64.0%) of all workers who rode public transportation to work took a train; about a quarter (23.8%) took a bus.

** Workers age 16 years and over; Village of Romeoville.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

Romeoville's Ride Around Town Program

The Village operates the Ride Around Town program, which offers paratransit service for Romeoville residents seeking rides within a 10-mile radius of the Village for various ap-

FIGURE 1-8
Travel Time to Work

Travel Time	#	%
Less than 5 minutes	368	2.1%
5 to 14 minutes	2,714	15.8%
15 to 29 minutes	4,132	24.0%
30 to 44 minutes	4,567	26.6%
45 to 59 minutes	2,452	14.3%
60 or more minutes	2,956	17.2%
Less than 30 minutes	7,214	42.0%
30 or more minutes	9,975	58.0%
TOTAL	17,189	100.0%

** Workers age 16 years and over; Village of Romeoville.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

pointments, shopping, and dining. The Ride Around Town program serves a three service areas that progressively extend outward to nearby communities at fixed fare rates.

Commuting Characteristics

With limited public transportation options available in Romeoville, it is little surprise that only 2.4% of all workers (age 16 years and over) use public transportation as a means of transportation to work, as summarized in Figure 1-7. More workers walk to work (2.7%) or work at home (3.1%) than commute via transit (2.4%). In addition, more than half (58%) of all workers spend 30 minutes or more commuting to work and almost one-third (31.5%) allot 45 minutes or more on their commutes, as summarized in Figure 1-8.

Even for those residents that commute via public transportation, it is likely that many still require some commuting via private automobile to gain access to a Metra train or Park-n-Ride facility. Increased public transportation options within Romeoville are needed to accommodate not only commutes to work but also the general travel needs of residents and visitors. By providing viable public transportation options, commute times improve and roads become less congested; in turn, these improvements help enhance the quality of life in Romeoville, allowing residents to use their time for more important matters, and improving the environment with less automobile-induced impacts.

The East Side of Romeoville poses unique circumstances that inspire the community to think outside the box and establish a distinctive and vibrant TOD that can become the model that breaks the mold of the typical high density, mixed use TOD prototype.

Commuting Survey Findings

The findings from the community survey present an array of preferences and feedback relating to the prospects for Downtown Romeoville and the East Side. In particular, the survey findings indicate significant community insight into transit service in Romeoville. Key transit-related survey findings are summarized in Figure 1-9, which provide first-hand preferences and observations of community members. The complete survey results are provided in Appendix A.

Opportunity for Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a prevalent planning concept that holds great potential to create sustainable communities, merging land use and transportation planning principles. TOD is a smart growth approach to community development that promotes compact development, connectivity, multi-modal transportation, pedes-



The Canadian Railroad traverses parallel to New Avenue and intersects at 135th Street. Romeoville's proposed Metra station would be located along the west side of the railroad via the Heritage Corridor Line.

A TOD in Romeoville will derive its distinction and success from the linkages it will make to connect employees to jobs, customers to businesses, residents to diverse housing options, explorers to trails, and travelers to the region.

trian-friendly environments, and sustainable design, which are the traits that people – from homebuyers to business owners to investors to developers – are increasingly seeking in a community.

With the community's desire to enhance public transit options, the availability of undeveloped land parcels, and the proposed plans to establish a new Metra station along the Heritage Corridor Metra commuter train line, Romeoville can capitalize on these assets to further develop its multi-modal transportation network and encourage sensible development around a new transit hub for the Village.

In addition, the East Side of Romeoville poses unique circumstances – namely the opportunity to strike a balanced mix of uses adjacent to the prominent and highly viable CITGO refinery – that inspire the community to think outside the box and establish a distinctive and vibrant TOD that can become the model that breaks the mold of the typical high density, mixed use TOD prototype.

While development of the East Side will not be reflective of the textbook example of a TOD, the TOD in Romeoville will derive its distinction and success from the linkages it will make to connect employees to jobs, customers to business-

es, residents to diverse housing options, explorers to trails, and travelers to the region.

The Romeoville East Side Plan presents an opportunity to not only establish transit facilities and transit-oriented development, but also advance Romeoville as a leader in developing a creative prototype for TOD's.



Multi-use trails, such as this pathway leading from 135th Street to the Centennial Trail, provide pedestrians and bicyclists with an off-road option to travel to various points within the Village and through the region.

FIGURE 1-9
Community Survey Results

Below is a sample results page from the community survey that was administered during the initial phases of the planning process. Some representative survey findings relating to Downtown Romeoville and the East Side are summarized to the right. Complete survey results are provided in Appendix A.

12. Do you take transit for any other type of trip besides work? (check all that apply)						
	Metra (train)	Pace (bus)	Dial-A-Ride Program (bus/van)	Romeoville Ride Around Town Program (bus/van)	I do not take any form of transit	Response Count
Shopping	29.3% (65)	2.3% (5)	0.5% (1)	1.8% (4)	67.6% (150)	222
Dining	26.3% (56)	1.9% (4)	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)	71.8% (153)	213
Entertainment	47.1% (121)	3.9% (10)	0.8% (2)	0.8% (2)	51.4% (132)	257
Medical	3.3% (6)	1.1% (2)	0.6% (1)	1.1% (2)	95.0% (172)	181
Education	4.4% (8)	0.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	95.1% (173)	182
Other	12.4% (12)	1.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	86.6% (84)	97
If you selected Other, please specify:						14
						answered question
						skipped question

91% of survey respondents indicated that shopping and dining are important activities/services that should be attracted to Downtown Romeoville

Other activities/services that were ranked as "important" include:

- » Entertainment
- » Parks and recreation
- » Personal services
- » Financial services
- » Medical/healthcare

81% of survey respondents would shop/dine/visit Downtown Romeoville a lot more if the following "first priority" improvements were made:

- » Types of stores
- » Transit service access
- » General physical appearance
- » Flooding/stormwater mgmt
- » Types of restaurants

44% of survey respondents stated that they know about Downtown Romeoville and shop/visit there

52% of survey respondents stated that they know about the East Side and the potential plans for a Metra station

23% of survey respondents take Metra for trips other than for work (e.g. shopping, dining, entertainment, education, etc)

64% of survey respondents do not currently take any form of transit to work

79% of survey respondents indicated that retail businesses and restaurants are important uses that should be attracted to the East Side

Other uses that were ranked as "important" include:

- » Recreation/parks/open space
- » Entertainment
- » Mixed use buildings
- » Offices
- » Medical/healthcare

88% of current transit users would use the new Metra station in Romeoville

38% of current transit users access Metra stations other than the ones in Lockport or Lemont as their origin station; many access the BNSF Line rather than the Heritage Corridor Line

86% of current Metra riders arrive at the station via car (either being dropped off or driving alone and parking)

96% of survey respondents indicated that they would take Metra more often if service was more frequent

Other factors that would encourage greater Metra ridership include:

- » Weekend service
- » Better walking/biking routes to the station
- » More express service
- » Better connections with other transit