**Chicago Elevated Electric Passenger Trains, the "L"**

Timeline

1893 – Steam powered train operates on elevated track from downtown Chicago to Columbian World Fair at Jackson Park on Lake Michigan. This is the basis for the southside L lines. Electric third-rail power is demonstrated at the World Fair and becomes the preferred power method for the elevated.

1897 - Elevated train "Union Loop" with 4 sides completed in downtown Chicago giving the downtown area its name of the Loop. There were originally 3 stops per side; now there are now 2 stops per side. The Lake Street line is completed. Elevated trains become electrified.

1902 - The Chicago, Aurora, and Elgin predecessor third-rail line begins service from Forest Park to four cities along the Fox River. By 1905, there is service directly to the Loop using the Forest Park line.

1907 - Ravenswood elevated and street-level branch line of the northside train opens. Initial service ends at Belmont on the northside line. Stockyards and Kenwood branches open, crossing the southside line at Indiana Avenue.

1908 - The Chicago South Shore and South Bend interurban rapid line builds to South Bend, Indiana. The northside L train goes to Howard and continues to Wilmette mostly on an embankment.

1913 - <https://www.chicago-l.org/maps/route/maps/1913map.jpg> All elevated trains where the track is built over the street are completed. These trains that go to the Loop include the northside train from Belmont, the Lake Street line, the northwest Metropolitan lines to Logan Square and Humboldt Park, the west Metropolitan lines to Forest Park and Douglas, and the south lines to West 63rd St and Jackson Park. A crossing line goes from the Stockyards to the Lake Michigan at 42nd St. The Ravenswood service connects at Belmont on the northside line but during rush hour proceeds to the Stockyards.

1916 - The Chicago, North Shore, and Milwaukee interurban line builds the Shore line to Milwaukee from the Wilmette station, and has service directly from the Loop.

1926 - The North Shore line builds the high-speed Skokie Valley line from Howard in Chicago to North Chicago Junction to connect with the Shore line. Trains continue on the northside line to the Loop using the Evanston Express tracks. The South Shore interurban line has all-electric service from South Bend to the Illinois Central Terminal near the Loop, now Millennium Station.

1943 - State Street subway connects the northside and southside lines.

1947 - The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) is founded to integrate all the passenger services in the city of Chicago. Operational efficiency is improved by closing underused stations and introducing AB skip-stop service on some lines. Better management of train timing and resources improves passenger throughput to the Loop. By 1948, one million passengers per day go to the Loop area on CTA trains.

1951 - Dearborn Street subway connects Logan Square line with Forest Park line. As a result of this, the shuttle connected Humboldt Park elevated line on North Street is abandoned the next year.

1955 - North Shore - Shore line abandoned from Wilmette to North Chicago. Chicago and Northwestern Railroad (CNW) commuter tracks continue adjacent service to the northern suburbs.

1957 - Chicago, Aurora, and Elgin ends passenger service. Through direct express passenger service to the Loop via the rebuilt Forest Park line along the Congress Expressway is no longer available, and the transfer at Forest Park is not successful. The Stock Yards branch which served the Union Stock Yards and the Canaryville neighborhood of Chicago closes, as does the Kenwood branch on the east side of the Indiana Avenue station on the southside line.

1962 - Lake Street surface line from Central to Harlem becomes elevated onto the adjacent embankment that also has freight tracks and suburban train service.

1963 - North Shore - Skokie Valley line to Milwaukee, Wisconsin is abandoned. The CTA substitutes the non-stop Skokie Swift service, now the Yellow Line, from Howard to the Dempster station in Skokie.

1969 - Red Line in the middle of the Dan Ryan expressway opens from the Loop to the south at 95th Street. Originally it was connected through the loop to the Lake Street line.

1984 - Blue Line in the middle of the Kennedy Expressway opens from O'Hare Airport to Logan Square. It then continues through the Dearborn subway to the line along the Congress Expressway to Forest Park.

1993 - The Dan Ryan expressway line is connected to the State subway Red Line from Howard on the northside of Chicago. Orange Line opens from the Loop to Midway Airport by using previously constructed freight lines on embankments. The Lake Street line goes through the loop to the former southside lines to form the new Green line. The Green line is composed from the oldest lines and is also the only entirely elevated line. The Ravenswood, now the Brown Line, has extended service to the Loop. The northside rush-hours Evanston Express to the Loop is renamed the Purple Line. The electrified rail section on the former Illinois Central Railroad in Chicago is now the Metra Electric line.

2006 - Pink Line reopens on the former Douglas line to the former Paulina Street connector to the Lake Street line to the loop. That route had not been used by CTA passengers since 1958. The current map shows the new system with named colored lines:

<https://www.transitchicago.com/maps/system/>

One interesting construction item is that a true elevated passenger line which consists of an elevated steel structure carrying trains above a street has not been built in the Chicago area since at least 1913. Many of the shorter previous elevated lines have been removed. New construction is either in an expressway median, a subway, or using an existing freight train embankment.

Chicago passed several ordinances to remove grade crossings on freight lines. See the web site: <https://www.chicagorailfan.com/elevate.html> These ordinances, passed between 1892 and 1930, were paid for by the railroads. The freight railroads serving the Chicago area are the basis for Metra suburban passenger service from downtown Chicago. All the lines except for the Metra Electric lines and the South Shore line to South Bend, Indiana, from Millennium station in downtown Chicago are now diesel powered.

The current suburban rail lines are shown on a map of the area: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Metra_stations#/media/File:Metra-System.png>