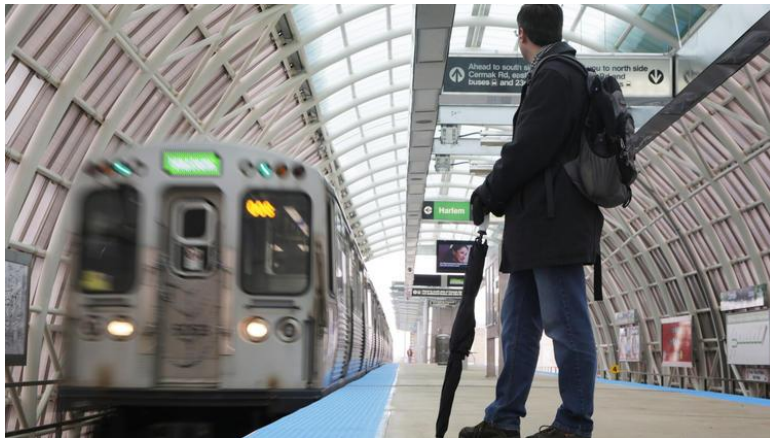


# Chicago Tribune

## Long-awaited Cermak-McCormick Place Green Line station opens

Jon Hilkevitch | February 9, 2015



Passengers wait on the platform for the next train Sunday at the new Cermak-McCormick Place Green Line station.

**A** roughly 2 1/2-mile gap in CTA rail service that lasted 38 years on the Near South Side was eliminated Sunday, when Green Line trains started making stops at a station on Cermak Road near State Street.

The new \$50 million Cermak-McCormick Place station is within walking distance of the Motor Row entertainment district and McCormick Place. City officials and developers said they are optimistic that the new access to rapid transit will help accelerate the expansion of businesses and housing in the South Loop area.

### New CTA station

Opens Monday on the Green Line at Cermak

- CTA rail stations
- Bus routes

Source:  
Chicago Transit Authority

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They also expect that conventioners and other visitors to McCormick Place and to a planned DePaul University arena nearby will take advantage of riding public transit instead of driving. The first big test will come this weekend when the Chicago Auto Show opens at McCormick Place. The show runs Saturday through Feb. 22.

The wheelchair-accessible station, equipped with two elevators from the street to the platform, has entrances on both sides of Cermak at State Street and an additional entrance a long city block to the south, on 23rd Street, to provide a link for people going to McCormick Place. The convention center, the future DePaul sports facility and a planned 1,200-room Marriott hotel are a couple of blocks east of the station.

Four CTA bus routes — No. 1 Bronzeville/Union Station, No. 4 Cottage Grove, No. 21 Cermak and No. 29 State — serve the station.

"A lot of people, me included, thought this station was long overdue and actually would never be built," lifelong Chicago resident George Williams, 67, said Friday while grabbing lunch at White Castle next to the rail stop. "It was a missing link, and the buses weren't filling the need for faster service."

A Divvy bicycle-sharing station is also at Cermak-McCormick, along with racks for other bicycles.

In addition, the Red Line's Cermak-Chinatown station is two blocks west. Red Line trains run 24 hours. The Green Line does not operate overnight.

The signature design element of the new Green Line "L" station is a tubelike canopy that provides a windbreak for passengers on the center island platform. The perforated panels on the 260-foot-long tube allow natural light to filter onto the platform. On both ends of the tube are translucent cantilevered canopies to protect commuters from the weather as they approach and exit the elevated platform.

"Because we only had so much space to work with, we decided to keep the platform as open as possible," said Julian Silva, an architect with the Chicago Department of Transportation, which managed the station construction project for the CTA.

"Instead of having wind shelters at the center of the platform, which the CTA typically does, we moved the shelters to the outside of the track, to create this tubelike structure that protects you no matter where you are in the boarding area," Silva said.

The open, airy concept of using perforated metal on the skin of the tube is carried through on stainless steel "skyline benches" on the platform and on galvanized steel mesh panels that enclose the walkway between the main station entrance on Cermak and the 23rd Street entrance.

The station is outfitted with security cameras and illuminated with LED lighting — the first CTA station to have 100 percent LED lights, which are more energy-efficient than fluorescent tubes. But your Getting Around reporter was left with a feeling of concern about personal safety, especially late at night, with regard to the long, zigzagging walk between the 23rd Street entrance and the main station entrance on Cermak. Officials said the 23rd Street entrance might not be staffed at all times that the station is open.

The new station is outfitted with CTA Train Tracker monitors and other travel information that is common at all rail stations. But more signage beyond the markings on support columns would be helpful to inform visitors about the station's proximity to Chinatown, McCormick Place and Motor Row. CTA and CDOT officials said they are working on installing more directional signs as part of a final list items to complete the project.

The station is situated between the Red, Green and Orange lines' Roosevelt stop near downtown and the 35thStreet-Bronzeville-IIT Green Line station. A so-called "infill" station, it originally was scheduled to open in 2014, but construction was delayed by harsh weather over the past two winters, officials said. The project broke ground in August 2013.

"Last winter was pretty brutal when we were doing the work to support the foundations for the tube structure. The drill rigs were freezing up left and right," Cliff Olszewski, resident engineer for H.W. Lochner, Inc., a construction manager on the project, said Friday as crews completed work for Sunday's opening.

The station erases a void that has existed since 1977 when the CTA, citing declining ridership, closed the original Cermak (then called 22nd Street) station. Critics at the time said the CTA helped along the ridership losses several years earlier when it limited boardings to weekday rush periods only.

The original station was built in 1892 by the Chicago & South Side Rapid Transit Railroad, which was Chicago's first elevated railway. The station was torn down in 1978.

Engineers who designed and built the new station said the biggest challenge was squeezing it in between the existing track and elevated structure — and carrying out the project while Green Line trains were operating. Rail service was suspended over some weekends to accommodate the installation of new tracks, railroad ties, signals and communications systems, officials added.

"The station structure is completely independent of the 'L' structure," Silva said.

The CTA is estimating 2,200 daily rider boardings at the station. That would make Cermak-McCormick Place the second busiest on the South Side elevated branch of the Green Line, behind 35th-Bronzeville-IIT, officials said. The Green Line provides more than 63,900 rides on an average weekday, according to the CTA.

"Like the Morgan station that opened in 2012 on the Green and Pink lines, this new station will help meet demand that exists today, as well as future growth," CTA President Forrest Claypool said. The Morgan station, at 958 W. Lake St. in the West Loop, replaced a station that was closed in 1948. Built at a cost of \$38 million, Morgan was the first new "L" stop to open in 15 years.

The Cermak-McCormick Place station, while under consideration with a number of other options since at least 2002, is the first station that began during the Emanuel administration. Mayor Rahm Emanuel is scheduled to cut the ribbon on the new station Monday, officials said. The mayor said in a statement issued Sunday that the station will encourage more investment and bring more jobs to the Near South Side.

Construction of the station, which is the 146th station on the CTA system, was funded in part by tax increment financing and a "congestion fee" charged to drivers who park downtown.

Meanwhile, construction is scheduled to start this year on a new Loop elevated station at Washington/Wabash. The \$75 million station will replace two stations on Wabash, at Randolph and Madison, according to CDOT plans.