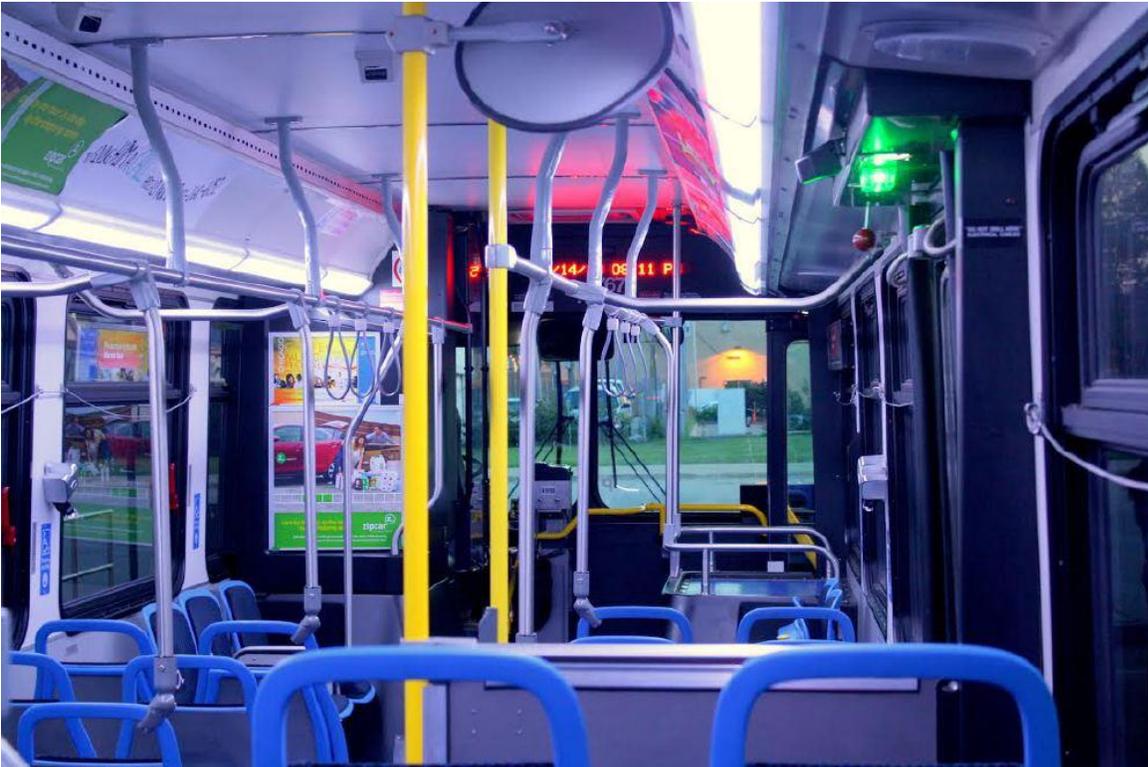


# CTA to add 940 video cameras to buses this year

WRITTEN BY ROSALIND ROSSI POSTED: 02/10/2016, 06:14PM



CTA board members agreed Wednesday to award Apollo Video Technology a \$1 million contract to install two additional cameras each in 470 New Flyer buses and to upgrade existing bus camera equipment by late this year. | Photo courtesy of CTA

Nearly 1,000 new video cameras are headed for Chicago Transit Authority buses this year as the CTA continues to expand one of the most aggressive bus camera programs in the nation.

CTA board members agreed Wednesday to award Apollo Video Technology a \$1 million contract to install two additional cameras each in 470 New Flyer buses and to upgrade existing bus camera equipment by late this year.

One camera per bus will be located above the operator, and the other above the door — both focused on the fare box area but from different perspectives, CTA spokeswoman Catherine Hosinski said.

The 940 new cameras will fill in missing video coverage areas on existing New Flyer buses. Newer CTA buses, manufactured by Nova Bus, already have cameras covering the fare box, Hosinski said.

The new cameras will add to an existing network of more than 23,000 cameras across the CTA system, many of which were added under Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

They are part of “one of the most aggressive bus camera programs in the nation,” Hosinski said. All 1,888 CTA buses have been outfitted with cameras since 2003 and currently hold seven to 12 cameras each, she said.

“For 13 years, 100 percent of our bus fleet has been fully equipped with cameras while other transit agencies out there are still trying to outfit all of their fleet,” Hosinski said.

Among the nation’s largest bus systems, the leader of the camera pack is Los Angeles’ LA Metro, which has placed 13 cameras on each of its 2,228 buses, CTA data indicated.

That compares to eight to 11 cameras on every Philadelphia bus; seven to nine on 100 percent of buses in Washington, D.C.; seven to eight on 57 percent of New York City buses; and six cameras on 40 percent of Boston buses, Hosinski said.

Every CTA train and rail station also holds multiple cameras.

Emanuel has credited the extra video eyes, and other efforts, for the 25 percent drop in CTA crime last year, the fourth straight year of decreasing CTA crime. Last year, 256 individuals were arrested after their images were captured on CTA cameras — an 8 percent increase over 2014.

“The hope is to continue the trends we’ve been seeing over the last few years, of continuing to drive crime down on the CTA and to also provide us with the tools that if something does happen that’s unfortunate on our

buses, we're able to identify those perpetrators," CTA President Dorval Carter Jr. told reporters Monday.

The new camera equipment also will allow the CTA to record video for longer periods of time and to produce higher quality images, officials said.

Also Wednesday, board members approved eliminating 100 CTA positions, for an annual savings of \$12.5 million.

The vast majority of the positions were vacant, and of the total 22 people affected, one has already been relocated to another CTA job, officials said.

Carter said the efficiencies were promised last year in the first budget he crafted since assuming the CTA presidency last May. All axed positions involve nonunion, "non-customer-facing" jobs, Carter said.

CTA Board members also agreed Wednesday to authorize the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to study existing rail capacity to determine if any CTA lines are expected to face capacity crunches in the next five to 10 years, which could make them a target for federal "Core Capacity" funding. The funding stream was created with the help of U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, D-Ill., to allow existing, aging transit systems to compete for funds intended to boost capacity previously reserved for new transit lines.

That move came just as President Barack Obama on Tuesday unveiled a 2017 budget that includes \$125 million in Core Capacity funding for the Red and Purple Line Modernization Project. That money, if ever approved and appropriated, would join \$35 million in previous Core Capacity funds and an additional \$156 million in U.S. Department of Transportation funds earmarked for the renovation of the North Side stretch of the CTA's busiest rail line.

The money is part of \$956.6 million in federal funds the CTA is seeking for the \$2.13 billion Phase 1 of the Red and Purple Line Modernization project.

Phase 1 includes renovation of four North Side CTA stations at Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn and Bryn Mawr; upgrading track;

reconstructing viaducts, some of them more than 100 years old; and constructing a controversial flyover north of Belmont.

Some residents contend the Belmont Bypass will soar like “a roller coaster” over the Lake View neighborhood but CTA officials say it is needed to untangle northbound Brown Line tracks from Red and Purple Express Line tracks and reduce congestion.

Also Wednesday, CTA board members approved awarding a \$2.2 million two-year contract to Garda CL Great Lakes to pick up, process and deposit an estimated \$45 million a year in bus cash fares. Only two vendors bid on the deal, officials said.

Despite the advent of the CTA’s Ventra payment system, 6 to 7 percent of all fares are still paid with cash, and armored car services that must “package” cash fares before depositing them are getting harder to find, officials said.

Even with Ventra, “We don’t have any expectations we will become a cashless system,” Carter said. “That will always be an option. The only question is, how much can I reduce the amount of cash” the CTA handles.