

Launch dates for Pulse bus service in Niles delayed

buglenewspapers.com/launch-dates-for-pulse-bus-service-in-niles-delayed

By Grace Tucker

May 9, 2018



Milwaukee Ave. line debut may be late 2018, early 2019 but preliminary construction underway on new stations



The location of future Pulse stations along Milwaukee Ave are apparent by the preliminary work already done. Photo by Jen Shea for The Bugle.

By Jen Shea | For The Bugle

Pace Suburban Bus began work on bus stations for its new rapid transit system, Pulse, this spring. But the company has pushed back the Pulse launch date to later this year or early next year.

Two Pulse lines will go through Niles on Milwaukee Avenue and Dempster Street. They're the first of 24 planned express routes across the Chicago area.

“The project timeline has been extended as needed to accommodate more time to secure the appropriate permits,” Pace spokeswoman Maggie Daly Skogsbakken said. “We’re disappointed by the delays, but not surprised. It’s difficult to predict process times as they vary

by municipality and project and often take longer on new projects.”

By this month, construction crews had dug out the perimeter of new stations along Milwaukee. The completed bus stops are supposed to feature vertical markers, heated shelters, raised platforms and real-time bus tracker displays, according to documents on Pace’s website.

“Any difficulties that they might be having, those aren’t coming from the Village of Niles. That might have something to do with the state of Illinois,” Niles Trustee Denise McCreery said. “Whenever you improve transportation, it’s good for residents.”

The Milwaukee Pulse will make 10 stops from Jefferson Park Transit Center to Golf Mill Shopping Center. Buses are scheduled to run every 10 minutes during peak hours, and every 15 to 30 minutes during off-peak hours and weekends. Pace officials say they plan to launch the Dempster Pulse route by the end of 2020. It will make 17 stops from the Davis Street Purple Line station in Evanston to O’Hare Airport.

“Extensive research and public input helped identify priority routes,” Pace said in a statement. “Seven priority routes have been identified for development over the next 10 years.”

The first Pulse line is estimated to cost \$14 million total, with some of that paid for by federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grants. The new buses will have WiFi networks and USB ports for commuters.

“Even though we have a free bus in Niles this is nice because it’s an express bus,” McCreery said. “It is an opportunity for people to come into our community and shop.”

Pace plans to install Transit Signal Priority (TSP) technology at intersections to keep buses on schedule. The devices, which change lights faster when necessary, cost about \$50,000 each. Pace obtained Congressional funding for the 12 Milwaukee stoplights and 50 Dempster stoplights that will use TSP technology.

“The selected Pulse station locations are strategically located to serve current Pace bus riders,” Skogbakken said. They “have been chosen based on current rider use, safety, and accessibility.”

Halsted Street and Cermak Road Pulse lines will launch after the Milwaukee and Dempster routes, which run next to the current Pace 270 and 250 buses. Skogbakken said Pulse is a complement to existing bus routes, not a replacement. The fares will be the same.

Construction on the new bus shelters is slated to begin this spring and summer. At some stops, Pace has already added reinforced cement street pads for the buses.