


# Oswego keeps up push for Metra service to Kendall County

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Linda Girardi

 Oswego is encouraging regional planners to make Metra commuter rail service in Kendall County a high priority in their future plans.

"Bringing Metra service to Kendall County would be a game changer for Oswego," Oswego Village Administrator Dan Di Santo said.

## ADVERTISING

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning is developing its next comprehensive plan for the region called ON TO 2050 which is scheduled for adoption in October.

The Oswego Village Board has passed a resolution that encourages the agency to place the need for commuter rail service beyond the city of Aurora as one of its chief priorities.

Kendall County is the only county in the Chicago metropolitan area that is not served by Metra commuter rail service, officials said.

According to Oswego officials, 2015 U.S. Census Bureau data shows that nearly 6,700 Kendall County residents commute to Chicago for work, which represents roughly 10.42 percent of the county's workforce.

"The (planning agency's) draft plan lists extending Metra service to Kendall County as a recommendation," Di Santo told The Beacon-News. "We want CMAP to know that it should be a high priority in the plan. High priority projects have a greater chance of receiving federal funding."

The planning group has invited officials from across the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois to be part of the process as it puts together its ON TO 2050 plan.

Di Santo said the resolution is the village's formal public comment about its desire to get Metra service in the area. The city of Yorkville is expected to adopt a similar resolution next Tuesday.

The resolution mentions that Oswego has made the Metra extension a top priority for decades. Oswego officials said studies done in the early 2000s concluded that commuter rail ridership demand existed and determined that extending the Metra Burlington Northern Santa Fe commuter rail line from Aurora into Kendall County was "feasible."

The village in March 2015 acquired 20 acres on the north and south sides of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks for a future Metra commuter station and parking lot at the northwest corner of Orchard Road and Mill Street.

Metra's studies about expanding commuter rail service to Oswego are ongoing.

Oswego Village President Gail Johnson renewed talks to bring rail service to the village in the summer of 2015. She was joined by leaders from Yorkville, Montgomery, Sandwich and Plano as

Di Santo said Metra is in the process of using federal funds to perform engineering design and environmental analyses of an extension of rail service, which are expected to be completed in 2019.

"We did receive word from Metra earlier this year that it had extended its deadline. The studies were originally supposed to be finished this summer, but now they have been set back to 2019 due to longer than expected negotiations between Metra and BNSF," Di Santo said.

"The good news is that BNSF is now on board with the study and the extension. In terms of the delay, while disappointing, we understand that this project is not going to happen overnight so an additional year is worth the wait if it means the project will happen," he said.

Di Santo said preliminary engineering will detail the route of the extension, location of the commuter station and develop cost estimates. He said an environmental assessment is being done as well.

An extension of service could see Metra trains going from the Aurora Transportation Center to a yet-to-be-determined point, Di Santo said. He said previous studies have proposed stations in Montgomery and Oswego, but it's possible other stations could be located in Yorkville, Plano and Sandwich.

He said Oswego is remaining optimistic about getting Metra service.

"The draft plan (of the planning agency) says of all the proposed Metra extensions ours is the most cost-effective," he said.

He said the Metra extension has widespread support.

"The hard part is delivering the message of being patient," he said. "When something takes so long — decades in this case — it can be hard to keep up hope. Rest assured, the village has hope and we are confident that Oswego will have a Metra stop. It is just a matter of when."

The planning agency's draft ON TO 2050 plan is available for viewing and public comment at [www.cmap.illinois.gov/onto2050](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/onto2050) until Aug. 14.

**Linda Girardi is a freelance reporter for The Beacon-News.**