



**CHICAGOLAND  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

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## **Chicagoland Chamber, InnoCentive unveil proposals that aim to increase local transit ridership to 1 billion rides a year**

*Crowd-sourcing approach generates global interest in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through improving Chicago's mass transportation system; more than 125 innovators compete for \$5,000 prize*

CHICAGO – The Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and InnoCentive today announced the results of a global competition that generated more than 125 ideas to increase regional mass transit ridership to reach 1 billion in annual rides with the goal of reducing the environmental impact of greenhouse gas emissions released by automobiles. Aaron M. Renn, a Chicago and Indianapolis-based urban affairs writer who currently runs a blog called the Urbanophile, won the Challenge with an innovative, comprehensive, and forward-looking approach that articulated how the Chicago Transit Authority could add capacity, better utilize excess off-peak capacity by attracting new off-peak riders and luring new riders by improving the quality of the user's experience. Renn states that beyond making transit "better", it means changing the goals and values that underpin public transit as it exists in Chicago today.

"By using collaboration to encourage innovation, we were able to generate countless new ideas for the mass transit agencies of our region to help them increase ridership so we can decrease the production of greenhouse gases," said Chicagoland Chamber Foundation President Lance Pressl. "The overwhelming response and interest in improving our regional transportation system brought new, innovative ideas to the forefront which potentially can be put into practice at our local transit agencies."

Submissions to the competition included ideas from locations as far away as Kenya, Australia and Japan. Some of these ideas included transformational green initiatives, updated approaches to marketing, and new fare structures. The Chicagoland Chamber now plans to compile all proposals and present them to regional transportation officials at the RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace.

In the winning entry, Renn detailed recommendations to better utilize existing capacity and add new capacity. Among the recommendations were (1) more efficiently utilizing the existing infrastructure, especially adding new off-peak rides and shifting rides from peak to shoulder periods; (2) adding a new bus rapid transit component to the CTA system; and (3) increasing mainline capacity on rail and bus. The submission also offered methods to entice new riders including (1) a more rider-centric view that focuses on maximizing the attractiveness of transit versus the alternatives in terms of cost, end to end journey time, and quality of experience; and (2) maximizing demand for trips by increasing employment in the Loop and changing policies with regards to land use.

"I'm honored that the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation chose my submission as the winner from a large and competitive field. Transit and climate change are among the key issues of the day, and I'm gratified to have my ideas on them considered by the Chicagoland Chamber and top transit officials in the region" stated winner Aaron Renn who will be furthered honored in May at the Chamber Foundation's upcoming Innovation Summit.

To launch this global competition, the Chicagoland Chamber worked with InnoCentive, a nationally renowned open innovation network. This network is becoming an increasingly common platform for companies and organizations to tap the public to solve their business challenges, enabling them to connect with creative thinkers from around the world.

"This is the first Challenge posted on InnoCentive by a major metropolitan city, and demonstrates the power of soliciting ideas and expertise from the public to solve a major environmental issue – carbon emissions," said Dwayne Spradlin, CEO of InnoCentive, Inc. "The Chamber received a wealth of responses to increase ridership on public transportation, but the ones that made the most sense were from Solvers living right in Chicago, which goes to show that the best solutions can often come from the very people who are experiencing the problem first hand and understand the inner workings of their own cities and towns. As with all InnoCentive Challenges, it was fascinating to watch this process unfold—from the initial posting to the conclusion—and the innovative solutions that resulted. This is why open innovation works and why it is so important that companies, government agencies and other organizations look outside their own walls to seek the insight of others."

The Challenge invited innovative approaches, financing, and novel customer solutions to make public transportation the "first choice" for daily transit needs. By boosting public transportation ridership levels to 1 billion rides, the City can decrease the number of cars on the road and achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. To reach the 1 billion rides per year ambitious goal, the Chamber estimated that a total of 800,000 new individuals must be convinced to ride public transportation. The Chamber targeted 1 billion rides per year because this is the peak level of ridership in the history of the CTA in 1947.

Solutions could take on many forms including: (1) aligning the CTA's capital program with the goal of increasing ridership; (2) improving the "user experience" on public transportation to make the rider's choice more attractive; (3) engaging the key stakeholders, including private sector employers, community organizations, local governments, in meaningful collaboration to ensure that service delivery and quality are aligned with user demand; (4) exploring innovative uses of capital/funding to secure innovative products that appeal to riders; (5) identifying incentives for employers to encourage employees to use public transportation; (6) adopting an incentive structure at the CTA that rewards innovation and achievement of ridership goals; and (7) shifting the nature of the problem from a "subsidy model" to more of a "business model."

The Chamber launched the InnoCentive Challenge to support efforts underway within the region's mass transit agencies and the City of Chicago's "Chicago Climate Action Plan." Released by the city in 2008, the plan indicates that reducing automobiles on the road and minimizing the number of miles driven will have a demonstrable positive effect on the City's greenhouse gas emissions. For example, by removing 185,000 cars from the roads a reduction of one million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions will be achieved or by driving in aggregate 2,500 fewer miles the City would see a reduction of one metric ton of greenhouse emissions.

In addition to recognizing Renn for his proposal, the Chamber also recognized three additional innovative proposals with honorable mention designations. These honorees and proposal details include:

- Susan Beth Thomas from Chicago’s South Side suggested using thousands of square feet of standing seam metal roofs along the Blue, Green Pink and Orange Line routes which the CTA currently owns as well as thousands of standing seam metal roof space on its work sheds and repair garages to generate solar electricity on which to run the trains. Installing a grid-connected, Untied Solar Ovonic, Photovoltaic Renewable Energy System on every square foot of available CTA roof space will drastically reduce, or entirely eliminate the CTA’s electric bill and possibly create a constant income by selling any excess electricity back to the ComEd ‘grid’. The Blue, Green, Pink and Orange Lines all operate on an east-west line creating the Southern Exposure necessary to utilize the sun’s energy most effectively. This effort would transform the CTA into the first major transportation system in America to convert to renewable energy.
- Olympia Moy from Chicago’s West Side detailed recommendations for a new transit pass program, similar to the successful ECO-Pass program in Boulder, CO which encourages a greater number of people to use the public transit system through deeply discounted prices for year-long transit passes. Based on a medical insurance model, a group of residents can create a neighborhood area that elects to collectively buy into the ECO-Pass program. New riders are attracted by the convenience of having a pass that competes with the “car keys in the pocket,” and transit systems benefit by having a secure influx of revenue at the beginning of each fiscal term.
- John Whelan from Chicago’s North Side detailed a three step program to transform public transportation in Chicago. The first is to engage the Chicago Climate Exchange and categorize the project as an energy efficiency program to give the City of Chicago the ability to sell carbon offsets on the open market realizing an immediate monetary value. Second, every time a rider takes the train or bus, they receive a “Chicago Carbon Credit” that is added to their Chicago Card account. This “Chicago Carbon Credit” would be correlated to the actual amount received by the City by selling the CO<sub>2</sub> offsets mentioned above. This will create a direct line of sight between the user’s daily action and helping the environment, making it an obvious choice to use public transportation. Lastly the Solver suggests the City should revamp its advertising program with a singular emphasis on making it fashionable to use public transportation. Properly executed, the advertising program would give riders a clear understanding about their individual contribution to helping the environment, a desire to accumulate Chicago Carbon Credits, and, through the donation program, a way to feel good about helping their disadvantaged fellow citizens.

Note that the Chamber does not endorse ideas or policies submitted in the proposals in instances where they conflict with the Chicagoland Business Agenda approved by the Chamber’s Board of Directors.

### **About the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce**

*Since its founding in 1904 as the first regional chamber of commerce in the United States, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce’s mission is to make Chicagoland the most business-friendly region in America and enhance its members’ success through aggressive programs of advocacy, member benefits and services, and actionable information. The Chamber’s 2,600 members employ more than 1.2 million individuals in the region. Learn more by visiting [www.chicagolandchamber.org](http://www.chicagolandchamber.org).*

### **About InnoCentive**

*Founded in 2001, InnoCentive built the first global web community for open innovation, enabling scientists, engineers, professionals and entrepreneurs to collaborate to deliver breakthrough solutions for R&D-driven organizations. InnoCentive Seekers, who collectively spend billions of dollars on R&D, submit complex problems to the InnoCentive Marketplace where more than 170,000 engineers, scientists, inventors, business people, and research organizations in more than 175 countries are invited to solve them. Solvers who deliver the most innovative solutions receive financial awards ranging up to US\$1,000,000. InnoCentive’s Seekers include commercial, government and non-profit organizations such as Avery Dennison, Procter & Gamble, Pendulum, Eli Lilly and Company, Janssen, Solvay, SAP and The Rockefeller Foundation.*

