



For immediate release

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CTA Takes Next Steps to Upgrade Subway Wireless Service to 4G

*Agency expects to start modernization of underground wireless network in November;
Project to increase customer convenience and regional economic competitiveness*

The Chicago Transit Authority is moving closer to fulfilling Mayor Rahm Emanuel's goal of significantly improving wireless communications in CTA subways and underground facilities by awarding a contract to upgrade wireless infrastructure that will increase the speed and reliability of all major wireless carriers. The Chicago Transit Board will vote on awarding the proposed contract to Aldridge Electric, Inc. at its July 16 board meeting. The agency expects that the 4G wireless project work will begin as soon as November 2014.

"Investing in our CTA is one of the most important ways that we can invest in a world class future for the City of Chicago and upgrading transit technology in our city's subways benefits the thousands upon thousands of people who ride CTA trains every day," said Mayor Emanuel. "A new, state-of-the-art 4G wireless communications network is part of my commitment to modernize our transportation system, which will boost ridership, bolster our long-term regional economic growth and lead to a more enjoyable ride for commuters throughout our neighborhoods."

By providing continuous, reliable mobile phone service underground in all CTA subway platforms, mezzanines and tunnels, the upgraded network will offer better and more robust voice and high-speed data services and improve safety by providing more reliable communication between CTA personnel and emergency responders. It will replace existing infrastructure that dates back to 2005 -- before most smartphones, tablets and social networks were introduced -- which is inadequate to support modern wireless data needs.

"This much-needed modernization of CTA's underground cellular network will provide more convenience and enhance safety for CTA Red and Blue Line customers, and for our employees and emergency responders," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "We're pleased to select a highly qualified, experienced vendor to design and install the modern infrastructure our subway tunnels need, with no disruption to service during the project period."

Aldridge was selected as part of a comprehensive, two-part Request for Proposals (RFP) process that began in 2013 and that evaluated bidders on their project proposal, experience, qualifications, safety record and financial capability. Aldridge will use CTA's existing

infrastructure equipment, including fiber optic cable, power sources and other equipment, to minimize the upgrade's costs.

The CTA has funds to pay for the project but is aggressively seeking to partner with private-sector entities to pay for all or part of the \$27 million project. The agency expects that project work will begin as early as November 2014. During the entire project period, estimated to be 12 months, the CTA will keep the current wireless network operational and will continue to receive revenue from the six major wireless providers that currently provide service in CTA subways. The CTA owns and licenses its subway cellular network to six major wireless service providers, which generates \$1.8 million of annual revenue.

CTA has 11.4 miles of underground subway, or about 22 miles of individual tunnels, on the Blue and Red Lines. Additionally, the subway system includes multiple underground passageways connecting rail lines and providing access to nearby buildings.

The wireless upgrade is part of several technology improvements over the past three years, including expansion of Train Tracker and Bus Tracker functionality, digital information and train tracker screens at rail stations, and a dramatically expanded security camera network.

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