



Chicagoland Convention

August 28-September 2, 2026

Chicago is one of North America's most popular traction and tourist destinations and will serve as ERA's 2026 convention city. The Greater Chicagoland region is not only home to one of North America's most comprehensive rapid transit and commuter rail networks, but also four outstanding electric railroad museums, not to mention world-class museums, shopping and baseball teams to enjoy. See the last pages of this flyer after the registration form for the many museums, theater, tourist sites for you and your spouse or significant other to enjoy!

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) "L" network spans 8 routes and 224 track miles. In system extent and ridership, CTA's rapid transit system ranks as the third highest after the New York City and Washington, DC systems. The suburban Metra network encompasses 10 diesel and one electric commuter rail line. Chicagoland is also home to the last continuously operating interurban line, the South Shore Line, connecting Chicago with South Bend (Indiana) and a new Monon branch extending service to Munster, Indiana. Join your friends in Chicago August 28 through September 2, 2026 and experience these traction highlights first hand!

Chicago Convention Headquarters

Holiday Inn Chicago North-Evanston

1501 Sherman Avenue

Evanston, IL. 60602-4416

Phone: (847) 491-6400, ask for reservations OR (800) 465-4329 national reservations

ERA has selected this hotel for its superb package of guest amenities and moderate prices relative to the rest of Chicagoland as well as its location in the bustling transit friendly suburb of Evanston, IL. Our hotel location places it a 0.2 mile (6-minutes) walk to the Dempster Street Purple Line station for a less than one hour ride to the Chicago Loop, less to North Michigan shopping. The hotel is a 0.3 mile (8-minute) walk to Davis Street Purple Line station and connection to PACE's frequent limited-stop *Pulse Dempster Line* buses to and from O'Hare International Airport also in under an hour. The hotel is in Downtown Evanston which hosts a large variety of restaurants for evening dining and is four blocks from Lake Michigan and the acclaimed Northwestern University and eclectic boutique shopping. The hotel is a 20-minute bus ride to the 105-store [Westfield Old Orchard Mall](#) from nearby Davis Street Purple Line station.

The ERA has secured a block of rooms at the discounted rate of \$165 per night plus applicable taxes (currently 14.5%, subject to change without notice) for either one king bed or two queen beds for up to two guests. The main room block is for the nights of August 28 through September 1, with a smaller block of rooms available for the nights of August 25, 26 and 27 and September 2, 3 and 4 (check-out



next day), at the hotel's discretion. To get your widest selection of rooms and not to lose out on the ERA discount, plan to book as soon as possible!

Hotel amenities include:

- Complimentary hot American breakfast or continental breakfast each morning from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. for up to two guests per room.
- University Plaza Café—onsite restaurant and lounge
- IHG One Rewards for signed up members
- Complimentary guest room high speed Internet
- In-Room Mini-fridge, microwave and Keurig Coffee Maker
- Daily housekeeping
- Fitness center
- Outdoor pool
- Room check-in time at 3:00 p.m.; check-out time at 11:00 a.m.

Booking Rooms

There are two ways to book your reservation at this hotel:

1. **Online:** Click on this special ERA link: [**ERA 2026 Hotel Reservations**](#) to book your room.

Using this link will automatically bring up the hotel rates discussed above for rooms with one king bed or two double beds. These room rates are available for the nights of August 28, 29, 30, 31 and September 1, with check-out on September 2, with a more limited block for the nights of August 25, 26, 27 and September 2, 3 and 4 at the hotel's discretion.

2. **Phone:** Book your reservation by call the hotel directly at: (847) 491-6400, ask for reservations OR the national reservations line at: (800) 465-4329. Ask for the **Electric Railroaders Association 2026 Convention** to get the \$165 per night per room rate (plus applicable taxes, currently 14.5%).

You will need to provide the credit card number to reserve one night's deposit on your room reservation.

Should you encounter any difficulties making reservations, email President Bob Newhouser at bnnyc1955@gmail.com or call/text him at +1-917-482-4235.

Cut-off date for discount rate: These discounted rates expire after **July 31, 2026** or whenever the ERA room block is fully booked, whichever occurs earlier. Any additional reservations after the room block closes will be at the best available rate at the time of booking.

Reservation Cancellations: You may cancel your reservation at no charge until **24 hours prior to 3 pm day of arrival**, otherwise one night's room and taxes will be charged to the credit card on the reservation. **Note:** *If you can't make the first night of your visit, but can make the other nights, call the hotel immediately to preserve the rest of your reservation.*

Our room block is limited. If you think you will be participating in this convention, make your hotel reservations as soon as possible to secure your room. This will make it easier if the ERA needs to request additional rooms.



Reaching the Holiday Inn Chicago-North Evanston Hotel

From O'Hare International Airport: This is the closest airport to the hotel. Take the PACE *Pulse Dempster Line* bus from O'Hare to the last stop, Davis Street on the CTA Purple Line and Metra's UP-North line.. This bus line operates every 15 minutes throughout most of the day. **From Davis Street Station**, head south on Benson Avenue, left on Davis Street for one block, then right on Sherman Avenue down two long blocks to the hotel at Sherman Avenue and Lake Street. The trip including walking takes under an hour. Bus fares are \$2.00 with your contactless bank card. Go to www.pacebus.com for more information on fares and schedules.

From Chicago Union Station (Amtrak): Walk west on Madison Street to the entrance to Ogilvie Transportation Center (walk of 0.2 miles, about 5 minutes). Take Metra's Union Pacific-North commuter train line to Davis Street Station. **Then follow the directions above from Davis Street Station to the hotel.** Consult <https://metra.com> for information on schedules and fares. Commuter trains run less frequently than CTA or PACE buses.

Please be prepared for some walking on some days of this convention. The nearest "L" and Metra train stations are 0.2 to 0.3 miles from our hotel, about a 6-8-minute walk for those of normal mobility.

Friday August 28: Welcome & Evening Slide Presentation

We will meet at 7:30 pm at the Fountain A room at our headquarters *Holiday Inn Chicago North-Evanston Hotel*. After introductions of ERA officers in attendance and a brief overview of our Saturday itinerary, we will be treated to a presentation by Central Electric Railfans' Association (CERA) Vice President **John Nicholson**. John has been Project Manager and Editor of seven of CERA's outstanding *Bulletin* series of books and three issues of the *South Shore Interurban Historical Society's (SSIHS) Dispatch*, author of eight articles in the SSIHS *First & Fastest* magazine and serves as Associate Managing Editor of *First & Fastest* since 2017. John's program will cover the three Insull "super interurbans" plus photos of two cousins that entered the outskirts of Chicago (Chicago & Interurban Traction and the Chicago & Joliet Electric Railway), with peripheral references to the Illinois Central Electric operations. **CERA's board and its longtime members have been instrumental in launching this convention for which we at ERA are very appreciative. This event has no charge. CERA members and their guests are invited to attend this presentation even if not registered for other events.**

Saturday August 29: Milwaukee Streetcar and the East Troy Railroad Museum

Early start today! Please stop by the lobby between 7:30 am and 7:45 am to pick up your name badge and final itinerary for the trip. We leave the Holiday Inn at 8:00 am sharp on our chartered bus and head to Downtown Milwaukee to ride free on [The Hop Streetcar](#), Milwaukee's Downtown Streetcar network, opened in 2018 and extended in 2024. We will have 2.5 hours to ride and/or photograph the two lines in Downtown Milwaukee and enjoy lunch at the [Milwaukee Public Market](#) or stroll the nearby waterfront.

At 12 noon, we will then head to the [East Troy Railroad Museum](#). The museum has 28 cars of various types representing operations in Milwaukee, Chicago, the South Bend Interurban, Twin Cities and



elsewhere in Wisconsin. The museum operates on 7 miles of track dating back to 1907 as part of an East Troy to Milwaukee line operated by The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Company. We have requested a private charter with car 761, a 1930 interurban car operated by the Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee. After we leave the museum, we will make a brief shopping and snack stop at the [Elegant Farmer](#), a family-owned farmer's market with a gourmet level baked, deli and other market goods.

We return to the Holiday Inn-Evanston no later than 6:30 pm. The rest of the evening is free for you to either dine at the hotel's *University Plaza Café* or to stroll eclectic Downtown Evanston and sample the wide variety of nearby dining options or walk to Lake Michigan. Below is a list of restaurants close to our hotel open during dinner hours, provided by the hotel or local CERA members (there are more not listed).

Casual / Fast Food Local

[Buffalo Joe's Evanston](#)

[Peckish Pig](#)

[Lou Malnati's Pizzeria](#)

[Union Squared & Union Pizzeria](#)

Mid and Upscale Dining

[The Barn Steakhouse](#)

[Tapas Barcelona](#), Spanish

[Blind Faith Café](#), Vegetarian

[Trattoria Demi](#), Italian

[Ridgeville Tavern](#), American

National Chains

[Chipotle Mexican Grill](#)

[Potbelly Evanston](#)

[Jimmy John's Evanston](#)

[SweetGreen Evanston](#)

Sunday August 30: Fox River Trolley Museum & CTA "L" Tour with Historic Train

We leave our hotel by chartered bus at 8:00 a.m. for a visit to the [Fox River Trolley Museum](#) based in South Elgin, IL. The museum collection includes 28 cars operating on the portion of the former Aurora, Elgin & Fox River electric line. Cars include streetcars, interurbans and rapid transit cars from the Chicago city and interurban operations, but in particular, featuring cars from the storied Chicago, Aurora & Elgin interurban line. We will be able to ride and photograph equipment on a four-mile round trip, traveling along the banks of the scenic Fox River and in the Jon J. Duerr Forest Preserve. We will have approximately two hours to ride car(s) including a new short extension and tour the car barn and grounds.

From the museum, we proceed to the [Westfield Old Orchard Mall](#), one of Chicago's most prominent regional shopping malls for our lunch stop. The mall is home to 105 stores, including 28 restaurants of all types.



After our museum visit, we will be dropped off in the vicinity of the Skokie Dempster Street station for a **fan trip on the Chicago Transit Authority. (CTA) "L" system**. We have requested series a two-car 4000 "L" train, the oldest operating cars in the CTA historic fleet. This tour will be approximately four hours in length. At the conclusion of the trip, you will return to the Holiday Inn – Evanston hotel on your own. **Note: Those purchasing the entire August 30 program will receive a CTA 3-day pass. For fans in the Chicagoland region who wish to participate just in the CTA "L" trip, the registration form allows you to purchase just that tour.**

This evening is on your own after returning to the Holiday Inn Hotel.

Monday August 31: South Shore Railroad Excursion & ERA Annual Banquet

Daytime. We depart the Holiday Inn-Evanston at 7:15 am. *Before you leave the hotel, please make sure to pick up your box lunch which is included in your fare for this trip. ERA tour directors will announce the hotel location where you should plan to pick up your lunch. The box lunch includes a deli sandwich, chips, fruit, and water. Make sure you select your preferred sandwich on the registration form.*

We will walk from the hotel to Davis Street CTA Station (about 0.3 miles, an 8-minute walk) and take the CTA Purple Line to Washington/Wabash station and walk to Millenium Station. You will use your CTA 3-day pass which you received on August 30 trip (if you did not take that trip, you can purchase the CTA 3-day pass separately on the registration form). From Millenium Station, we will take a round trip on the South Shore Line, the electrically powered commuter rail successor to the famous [Chicago, South Shore & South Bend Railroad](#). Opened in 1903, the 90-mile mainline connects Chicago with South Bend, Indiana. During our excursion, we plan to also cover the new Monon Branch, scheduled to open in Spring 2026. Enjoy your box lunch on this trip. We will have a brief layover stop at the South Bend Airport terminal.

Evening. ERA's annual banquet will be held in a private room at the Holiday Inn-Evanston's *Fountain Room A*. An informal reception and cash bar will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A buffet dinner will follow promptly at 7 p.m. featuring beef, chicken and fish entrees, salad, sides and dessert. Our guest speaker is Bruce Moffat. Bruce's presentation will cover traction in Chicago, past, present and future. Bruce has a career steeped in Chicago area transit and traction. He comes from a 42-year career in the transit industry, 34 of them at CTA, starting as a planner and rising to management in CTA Rail Operations and retiring as Manager of CTA's Signage and Wayfinding. Bruce has published five books, authored 55 articles on traction and transit topics and was a past president of the CERA and a Director of the *Shore Line Interurban Historical Society*. **CERA members and their guests are invited to attend the after-dinner presentation even if not registered for other events (around 8 pm).**

Tuesday September 1, 2026: Excursion on Metra UP-North Line & Kenosha Streetcar

We depart from the Holiday Inn-Evanston at 10 am sharp and walk to the Metra Davis Street Station. We will catch the northbound 10:28 am train from Davis Street to the Kenosha terminal at 11:45 am. We have just four hours to visit Kenosha. In Kenosha, we will view, photograph and ride the [Kenosha Streetcar](#), the two-mile streetcar loop which connects the local commuter rail station to downtown attractions, a transit center, and the modern 64-acre HarborPark residential development situated on the Lake Michigan shore. Service is provided using six refurbished Toronto PCC cars, each painted in a different color scheme representing PCCs operating in Chicago, Cincinnati, Toronto, Johnstown and



Pittsburgh. The Kenosha operation's entire right-of-way has been carefully landscaped and features extensive use of New Orleans-style "neutral ground" with grass covering the entire roadbed except for the rails themselves. Six blocks are on city streets with mixed traffic. The cars are ADA-accessible.

We have until the 4:08 pm return Metra train to visit the maintenance shops, ride and photograph the line and enjoy lunch at the various restaurants within a short walk of the line. The 4:08 pm Metra train returns to Davis Street Metra station at 5:20 pm and expected to be back at the hotel by 5:30 pm.

This evening is on your own after returning to the hotel.

Wednesday September 2, 2026: Illinois Railway Museum, O'Hare Airport Dropoff

Our chartered bus leaves the Holiday Inn-Evanston at 8:30 am to visit the [Illinois Railway Museum](#) (IRM). Those departing on O'Hare flights today may store their luggage in the baggage compartment of our bus.

IRM represents North America's largest operating traction and mainline railroad museum, with over 500 pieces of equipment (including streetcars, interurbans, diesel trains, trolley buses and motor buses). We will be able to enjoy rides on either a one-mile streetcar loop or a 5-mile railroad line (10-mile round trip). You may purchase lunch at the Central Diner at the IRM during our visit.

We will depart IRM at 2:30 pm, making drop-off stops at O'Hare International Airport and the Holiday Inn-Evanston Hotel. Make sure to inform the bus operator as to the airline you will be flying with. Travel time from IRM to O'Hare is estimated at 50 minutes, however O'Hare has several terminals. The chartered bus will make every effort to get to O'Hare within an hour, subject to traffic. Nevertheless, plan your flights for departures earliest at 6 pm for domestic flights and 7 pm for international flights. ERA is not responsible for delays due to traffic. You are responsible for your on-time check-in for your flight.

IMPORTANT FOR ALL EVENTS! PLEASE READ!

Providing your mobile phone number (and email address) on your registration form is essential. If you have any questions, please e-mail Bob Newhouser at bnnyc1955@gmail.com or call/text him at 917-482-4235.

- 1. Please begin arriving 10-15 minutes before any scheduled trip to ensure an on-time departure.**
- 2. Do not wear sandals or flip flops** for any events given our proximity to transit equipment.
- 3. Scheduled ERA trip or event times shown in this flyer are subject to change in the final itinerary or during the trip without prior notice.** Daily trip itineraries may be changed without prior notice to ensure on-time return at the end of each day.
- 4. Entrance to public transit property facilities** is dependent on completing arrangements with them, some of which are pending as of this printing. Announcements will be made each day to update guests on essential information during all ERA events.



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The Chicago Bucket List of Sites

Source: <https://www.choosechicago.com/articles/bucket-list/the-ultimate-chicago-bucket-list/>

Explore Chicago's must-see museums

- Marvel at millions of artifacts and specimens at natural history haven, the **Field Museum**. Don't forget to say hi to SUE, the most complete *T.rex* ever discovered.
- Explore the **Art Institute of Chicago** to admire one of the largest collections of Impressionist art outside the Louvre and the stunning Modern art wing.
- Visit the **DuSable Black History Museum**, the nation's first independent museum dedicated to the history and culture of African Americans.
- Stand in a tornado, step inside a real U-boat, or travel deep down in a coal mine at the interactive **Griffin Museum of Science and Industry**.
- Meet a whole world of aquatic creatures, from stingrays to sea otters, at the lakefront **Shedd Aquarium**.
- Learn about the wonders of the universe at **Adler Planetarium**, the first planetarium in the Western Hemisphere.
- Go deeper into the story of our city, from the Great Chicago Fire to the jazz age, at the **Chicago History Museum**.
- Visit the **Chicago Architecture Center** for fascinating exhibits on the birth of the skyscraper, our changing skyline, and more.

Admire top sights and attractions

- You can't leave Chicago without heading to **Millennium Park** to take a selfie with the city's most iconic piece of public art — **Cloud Gate, aka "The Bean."**
- Hover just outside one of the world's tallest buildings at The Ledge, an all-glass balcony at Willis Tower's **Skydeck Chicago**.
- Enjoy panoramic views and a heart-pounding thrill ride at **360 CHICAGO** observation deck on Michigan Avenue.
- Stop at the **Chicago Cultural Center** to see the world's largest Tiffany glass dome and enjoy a host of free events and exhibits.
- **The Magnificent Mile**, one of the world's most iconic shopping districts, is located in the heart of downtown along Michigan Avenue.
- Visit **Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House**, a UNESCO World Heritage site that exemplifies Wright's signature Prairie style.
- Admire famous **architectural gems** (like the Tribune Tower, Wrigley Building, Marina City, and more) in the city that invented the skyscraper.
- Step back in time at the **Pullman National Historical Park**, the country's first planned model industrial community. It was constructed for workers employed at the Pullman car company factories.
- Bike, skate, walk, or run along **The 606**, an elevated urban trail that cuts through some of the city's hippest neighborhoods.
- Explore lakefront **Grant Park**, home to top city events and the historic **Buckingham Fountain**.
- Go for a swim, play beach volleyball, or relax in the sand at **Chicago's sun-soaked beaches**.
- Discover under-the-radar attractions and hidden gems in our diverse **neighborhoods**.



Embark on waterfront adventures

- Ride a soaring Ferris wheel, sample classic Chicago eats, hop on a boat tour, and more at lakefront **Navy Pier**, one of the Midwest's most popular attractions.
- Gaze up at the city skyline from a one-of-a-kind angle during a **kayak tour** of the Chicago River or lakefront.
- Stroll the buzzing **Chicago Riverwalk**, home to bustling outdoor cafes, wine bars, and shops.
- Learn the story behind Chicago's most iconic architectural feats on an **architecture boat cruise**, like the **Chicago Architecture Center River Cruise**.
- See the skyline on the **Chicago Water Taxi**, the most scenic way to get around town.

Cheer on Chicago sports

- Catch the beloved **Chicago Cubs** play a home game at historic Wrigley Field, the country's second-oldest ballpark.
- Root for the **Chicago White Sox** at Rate Field; come early to tailgate and stay for post-game fireworks.

Feel the beat of Chicago's music and nightlife

- Hear masters of **Chicago-style blues** at the city's best-known blues clubs, including **Buddy Guy's Legends**.
- Discover the next generation of comedy stars (in the city that invented improv) at our **comedy clubs** like the illustrious **The Second City**.
- Step into the Jazz Age at the historic **Green Mill Jazz Club** (a favorite of Al Capone) and explore other fabled **jazz venues in Chicago**.
- Dance all night to **house music**, a dance music genre born in Chicago's underground club scene.
- **Thalia Hall** is a Pilsen landmark and indie music haven that's also home to some of the neighborhood's hottest dining.
- Catch unforgettable shows across genres at **top Chicago music venues**, from neighborhood clubs to historic theatres.

Find your seats for Chicago theatre

- Get tickets for a show at **Broadway in Chicago**, which brings world premieres and classic hits to the city's bustling downtown theatre district.
- See a show at one of Chicago's **Tony Award-winning theatres**, like the **Court Theatre** and the star-studded **Steppenwolf Theatre**.
- Watch modern takes on the classics at the renowned **Chicago Shakespeare Theater**.
- Discover up-and-coming talent and avant-garde productions at **neighborhood theatres**, like the innovative **A Red Orchid Theatre** founded by Michael Shannon.