NILES METRA STATION Feasibility Study

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DRAFT · 03.21.2019

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Village of Niles has partnered with AECOM and The Lakota Group to prepare a comprehensive feasibility study for a potential new Metra station on the Milwaukee District North Line (MD-N) near Touhy Avenue in Niles. The idea of a station in this area originated from the Touhy Triangle Master Plan process in 2015-2016. There are a number of potential benefits that a new commuter rail station in the community could provide, including:

- **Provide a catalyst for transit-oriented development and accelerate the revitalization of the Touhy Triangle.**
- **Support existing businesses in their efforts to attract and retain employees by offering transportation alternatives and amenities.**
- **Mitigate access and growth limitations of nearby Metra stations (e.g., Morton Grove and Edgebrook).**
- **Serve regional commuters from neighboring towns by providing much-needed parking and improved public transit connections.**
- **Provide access to transit in an area that is currently under-served and auto-dependent.**

FEASIBILITY STUDY OUTLINE

Accompanying this Executive Summary document is a formal *Niles Station Feasibility Study Report* that provides a highly detailed technical analysis of the proposed station — including physical considerations, market conditions and ridership projections, site and operational impacts, and community input. The Study was conducted over an 11-month process as outlined below.

PROJECT TIMELINE: 2018-2019

TASK/TIME FRAME	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
Project Kick Off											
Station Spacing											
Market Assessment											
Travel Demand											
Station Site Impacts											
Financial Impacts											
Public Participation and Outreach											
Final Report											
Presentation to Village											

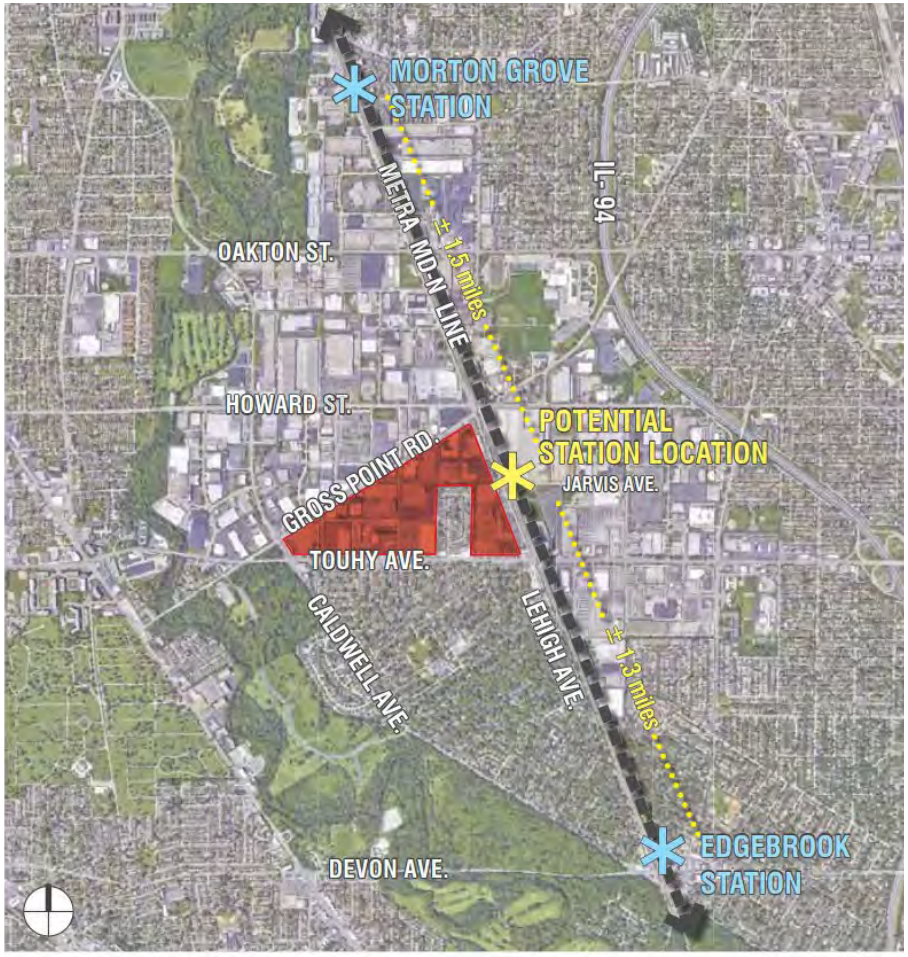
PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Village of Niles is one of the largest communities in the Chicagoland area without a commuter rail station. Currently, residents are forced to use stations in nearby communities that are beyond practical walking or biking distance, yet also have limited parking availability. Persons traveling to destinations in Niles, including work locations, also do not have the option of commuter rail from points south in Chicago or north in North Cook and Lake Counties.

The Niles 2030 Comprehensive Plan noted the Village's lack of a downtown center, affecting its ability to achieve a strong sense of community, image, and identity. The notion for considering a station was an outgrowth of the Touhy Triangle Master Plan adopted in November 2016.

The feasibility study seeks answers to the following questions:

- ***Will a new station allow for appropriate spacing to existing stations?***
- ***Can a location be identified to physically accommodate station amenities and parking?***
- ***Will the station be compatible with current railroad operations?***
- ***Will there be a sufficient number of potential users?***
- ***Will impacts to traffic, storm water, and other factors be manageable?***
- ***What are the estimated costs and revenues, and can the costs be realistically funded?***
- ***Will a station stimulate the redevelopment of adjacent properties?***
- ***Will there be public support for a station?***



Potential Station Context Diagram from Touhy Triangle Master Plan

2016 TOUHY TRIANGLE PLAN

Illustrative Views of Proposed Touhy Triangle Entertainment District

PLAN GOALS

In 2016, the Village of Niles worked with The Lakota Group and Gewalt Hamilton Associates to develop a Master Plan for the area bound by Touhy Avenue to the South, Gross Point Road to the North, and Lehigh Ave to the east — otherwise known as the Touhy Triangle. The adopted Touhy Triangle Master Plan provides the Village of Niles with the land use framework necessary to achieve the community's vision for a new mixed-use town center. The proposed development plan was based on the following over-arching goals:

- **Enhance Economic Vitality**
  The new plan calls for a vibrant, mixed-use, entertainment district with strong commercial uses and modern employment centers.
- **Foster a Greater Sense of Community**
  In the future the Touhy Triangle will be a distinct, vibrant place that residents will proudly identify as the 'heart' of their community.
- **Provide Opportunities for Recreation and Entertainment**
  New public open spaces programmed with a variety of amenities and activities will anchor a range of active commercial and entertainment-oriented uses.
- **Promote Arts and Culture within the Village**
  As a key destination within the region, the new town center will provide a setting for concerts in the park, fairs and festivals, and public art opportunities all set within a rich urban environment.

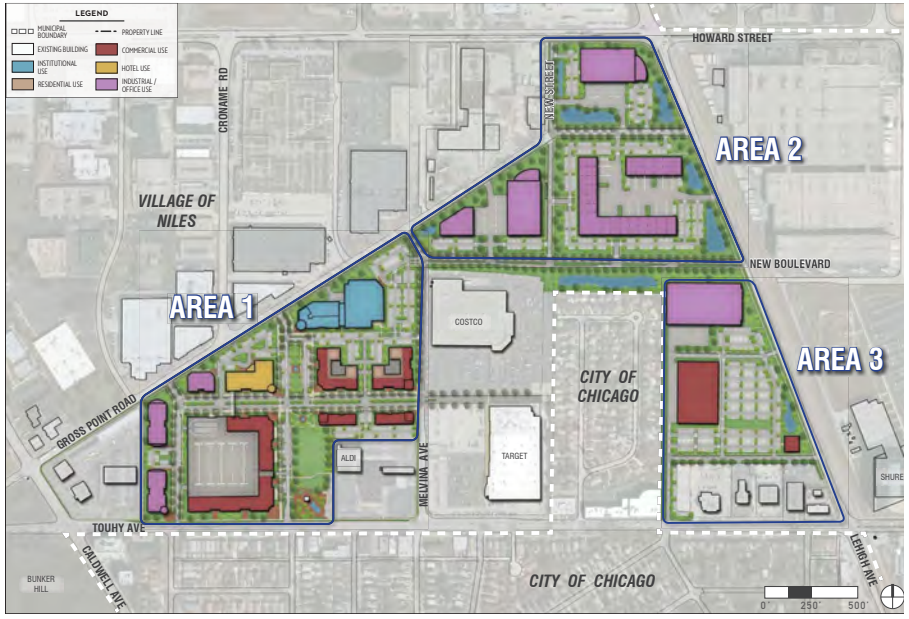
The Village is working in close partnership with area land and business owners, residents, and the development community to achieve these goals. The development of a Metra Train Station would serve as a major catalyst for development in the Touhy Triangle, as outlined in the plans below.

MASTER PLAN

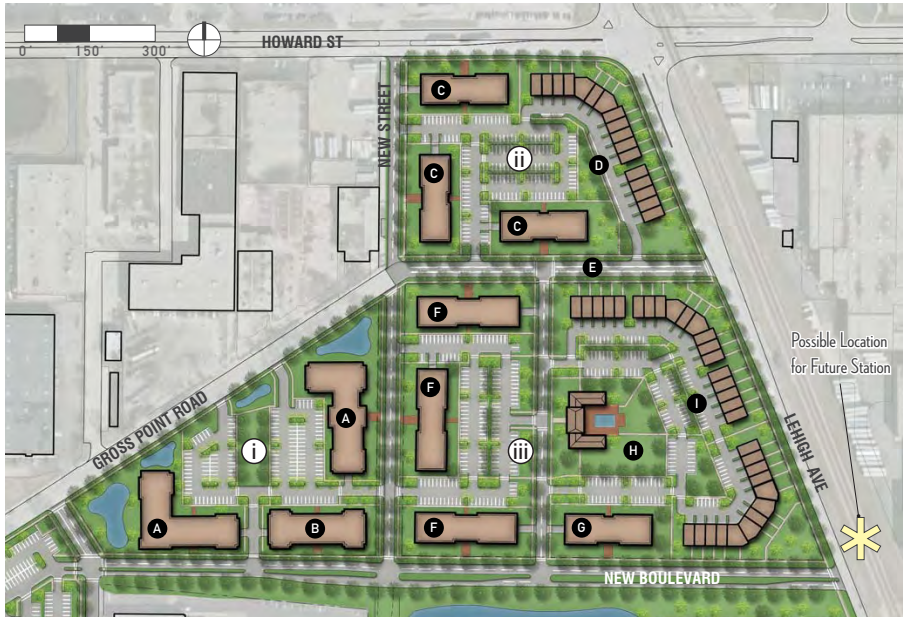
The Preferred Development Master Plan, shown below, provided an illustration of how the Village's preferred land use goals might be achieved through site design that is focused on fostering a dynamic, pedestrian-oriented public realm. The proposed 60.7 acre development area features compact, walkable, and well-balanced development that provides a range of uses and scale.

While there was no train station proposed at the time of concept development, the idea of one in the future did emerge during the planning process. As a result, an alternative development concept was designed to help illustrate what 'transit oriented' residential development might look like in the Touhy Triangle if Niles were to get its own commuter rail station. The development patterns outlined in this scenario have been further updated and refined in the current Feasibility Study effort as the train station concept has been examined in further detail.

Preferred Development Master Plan (2016)



Transit-Oriented Residential Development Master Plan Alternative (2016)



STATION SPACING

The proposed Niles station would be between the Morton Grove and Edgebrook Stations, which are 2.7 miles apart. The resultant spacing of approximately 1.3 miles would be somewhat less than preferred for commuter railroads. The analysis concluded that while station spacing can be a factor to the success of a potential commuter rail station, **spacing alone does not determine ridership performance.** Service levels, station amenities, destinations within walking distance, and the size of the potential ridership market are likely to be deciding factors in the feasibility of an infill station between the Morton Grove and Edgebrook Stations.

Generally speaking, transportation systems must choose between:

Wider Spacing
Minimal Stops
FASTER SERVICE

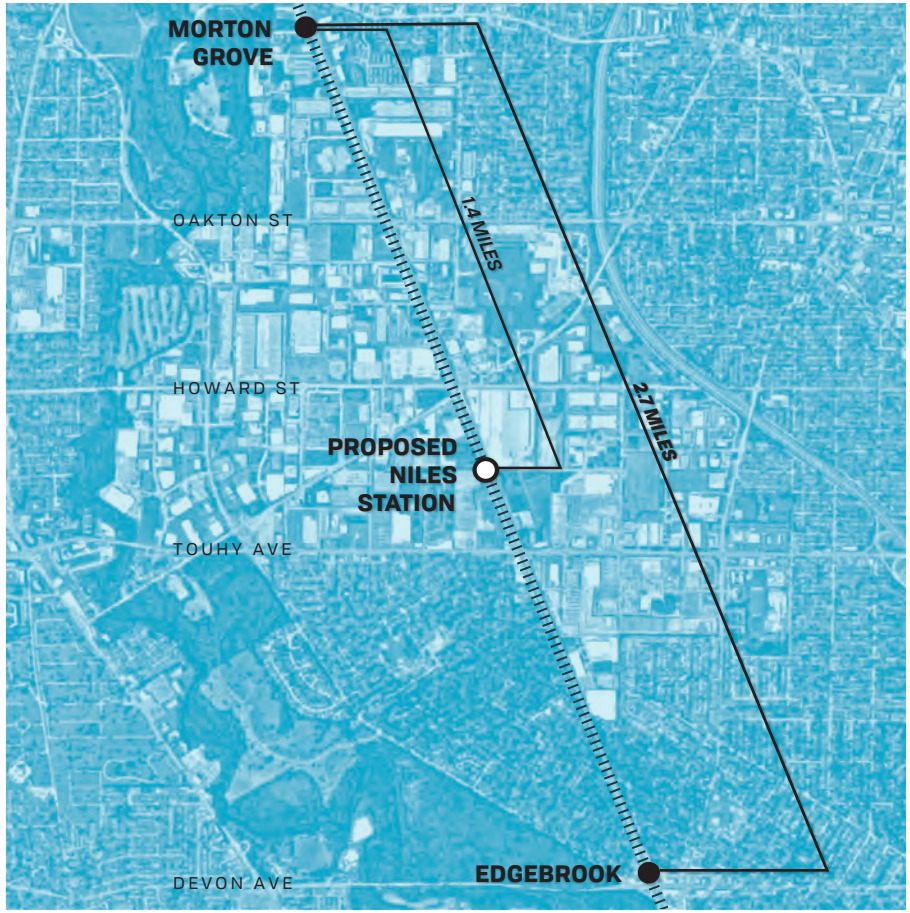
OR

Closer Spacing
More Stops
GREATER ACCESS

More stops also allow for stations that are easier to walk to. This walkability goes hand-in-hand with developing the station area to maximize the use of transit. If the station is to serve local destinations, opportunities to connect station area workers to their employers through a shuttle like program should also be explored. The current Lake Cook Road Shuttle Bug program is a strong example of a such a system.

STATION LOCATION

Three alternative locations were evaluated, where Howard Street, Jarvis Avenue, and Touhy Avenue intersect the MD-N rail line. The Jarvis site was recommended based on several evaluation factors, including the availability of physical space to accommodate the station building, platforms, parking, and other ancillary elements.

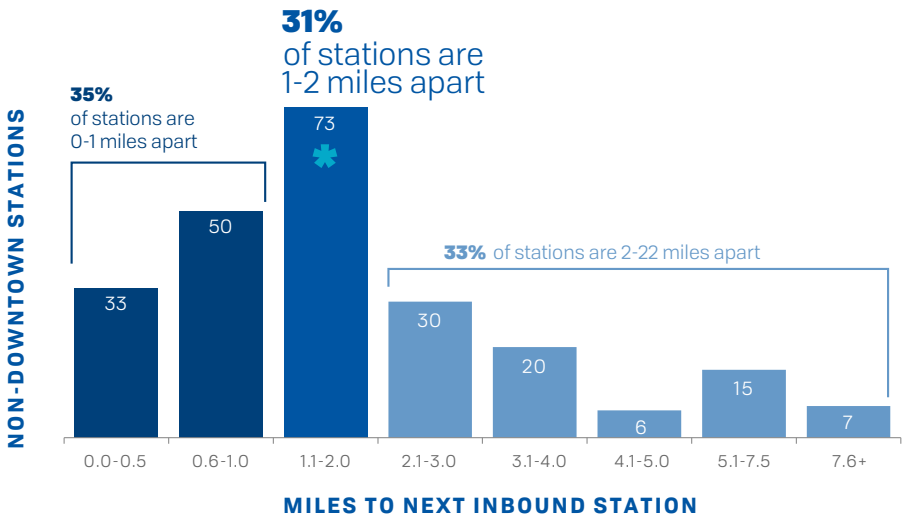


Station Spacing & Location Diagram

COMPARISONS ACROSS METRA STYSTEM

Metra average station spacing is two miles, including 83 stations within one mile of the next inbound station. The project team's research has found that there is not a strong correlation between station spacing and station ridership—too many other factors are at play influencing station performance that vary greatly between different stations.

Metra Non-Downtown Stations by Miles to the Next Inbound Station



Infill Metra Stations Added Since 1983

STATION	LINE	MILE POST	OPENING YEAR	DISTANCE TO NEXT IB STATION	DISTANCE TO NEXT OB STATION	GAP FILLED	2016 BOARDINGS
Palos Heights	SWS	19.2	2004	1.0	1.1	2.1	238
Rosemont	NCS	15.6	2006	0.8	1.5	2.3	35
Schiller Park	NCS	14.8	2006	1.8	0.8	2.6	36
Lake Cook Road	MD-N	23.0	1996	1.9	1.2	3.1	1,271
Belmont Ave./ Franklin Park	NCS	13.0	2006	1.6	1.8	3.4	32
Glen of North Glenview	MD-N	18.8	2001	1.4 *	2.3	3.7	1,070
Hickory Creek	RID	27.5	1993	2.4	2.1	4.5	999
Pingree Road	UP-NW	41.7	2005	3.1	1.5	4.6	751
Washington St./ Grayslake	NCS	43.9	2006	3.2	2.0	5.2	110
Prairie Crossing/ Libertyville	MD-N	39.2	2004	3.7	1.8	5.5	422
Romeoville	HC	29.2	2018	3.9	3.7	7.6	n/a
Route 59	BNSF	31.6	1989	3.1	5.9	9.0	5,781
35th St.	RID	3.1	2011	3.1	6.7	9.8	227

New infill stations that have been added to the Metra network have filled gaps ranging from 2.1 to 9.8 miles, and there has not been an obvious effect on performance related to the distance between stations that were filled.

* *Station spacing equal to proposed Niles Metra Station*

EXISTING CONDITIONS & MARKET ASSESSMENT

RIDER ORIGIN

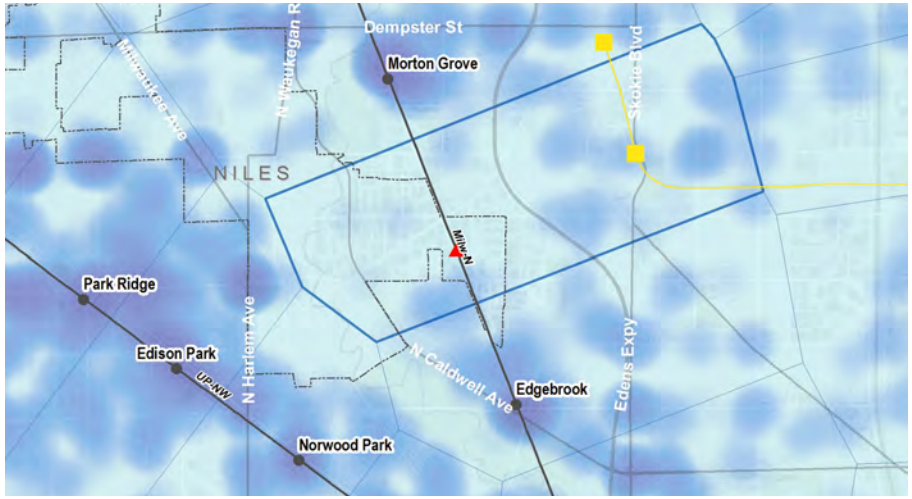
The users of a proposed Niles Metra Station will fall largely into two groups:

» ***Area Residents — riders who take the train TO their destination.***

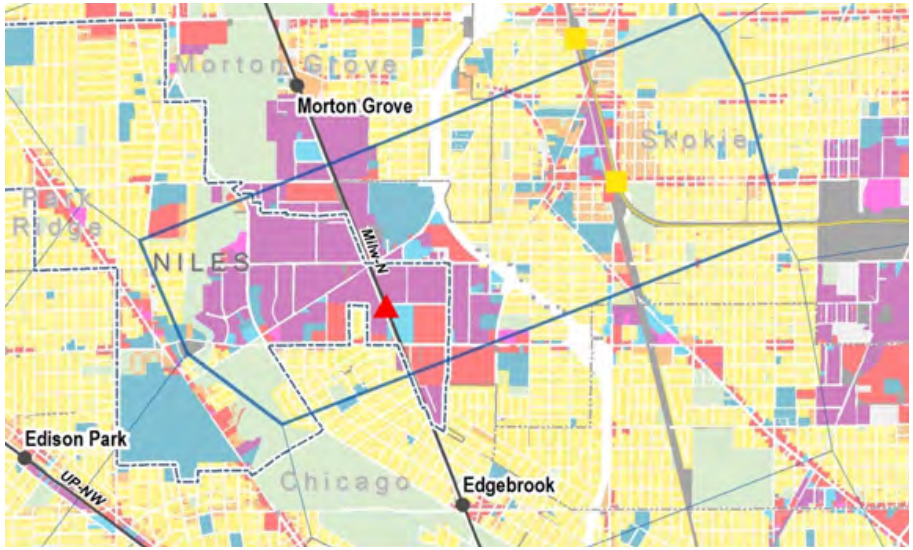
» ***Area Workers — riders who take the train FROM other stations.***

The Niles Station rider origin market shed, outlined in blue on the map to the right, indicates the general area that riders of the station would likely come from in relation to other Metra stations. The map also highlights the density of existing Metra riders within the identified market shed, with the darkest blue areas reflecting the highest density of riders.

One important note is that the Village of Skokie makes up a large portion of the Niles Station market shed. **The limited number of Metra riders in the Niles portion of the market shed is likely due to the largely industrial land use of the area, as illustrated in the land use map to the right.** The absence of a station is also a factor. As recommended in The Touhy Triangle Master Plan, over time the area could shift from industrial uses to residential, office, entertainment, and retail uses, which could also lead to an increase in rider orgins within the market shed.



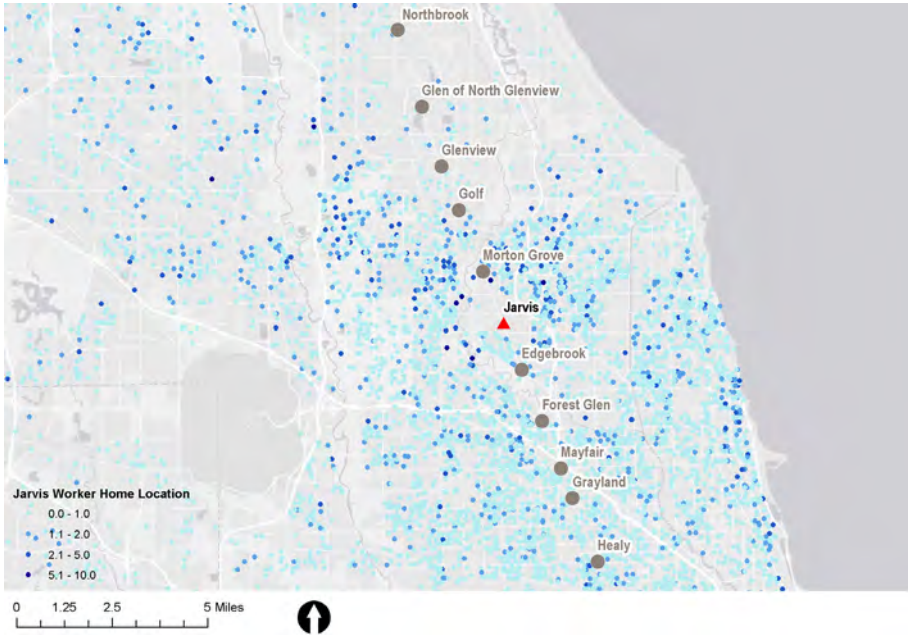
Density of 2016 Metra Rider Origins (0-3 riders per acre)



2013 Land Use

RIDER DESTINATION

Count of Home Location of Potential Niles Station Area Workers



To better understand the potential for a destination market, the map above illustrates the home location of people working within a half mile of the potential Niles station. Of these 7,180 workers, nearly half (3,500) are living in the market shed of an existing MD-N station. Of these 3,500 workers, 44% live upstream on the line (Morton Grove to Fox Lake) and the remaining 56% live downstream (Edgebrook to the CBD).

Station area workers living in the existing MD-N market shed were filtered to include just those that live at least four miles away from the proposed station—sufficiently distant to consider using Metra as opposed to walking, biking, driving, or taking the bus.

The typical destination market area of a rail station is the distance one can easily walk in about ten minutes—usually a half mile. However, several suburban Metra stations in the Chicago area are served by distributor buses that transport workers from their train to places of employment or other destinations. Niles is in talks with private shuttle companies to test a similar service for station area workers.

2,120 people

work within a half mile
of the proposed station location
AND
live near a MD-N Station
at least 4 miles away
from the proposed station

3,660 people

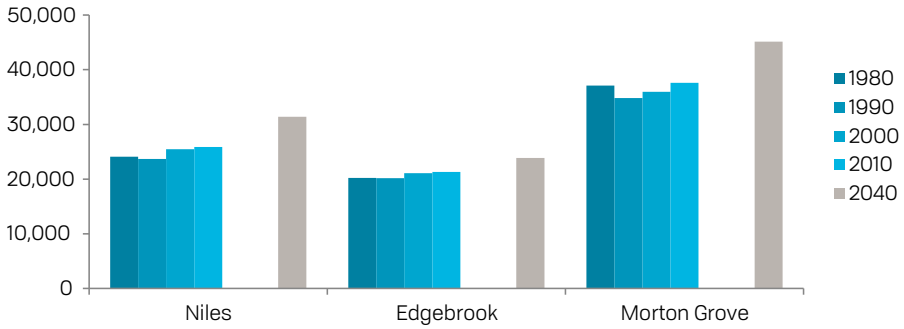
work within a mile
of the proposed station location
AND
live near a MD-N Station
at least 4 miles away
from the proposed station

POPULATION FORECAST

It's necessary to consider historical and projected socioeconomic growth to better assess the potential market for a station in Niles.

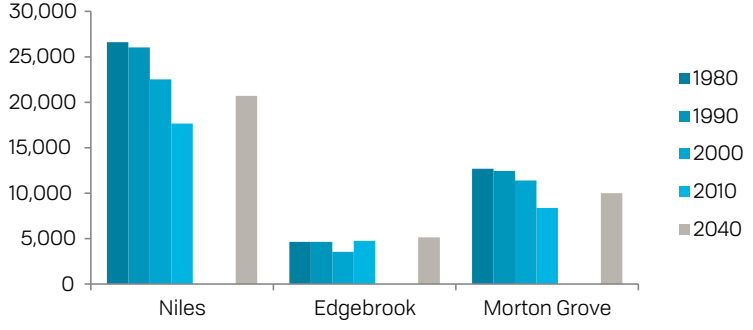
Origin Market Shed *CMAP Population History and Forecast*

The population in the Niles market shed had a slightly positive trend, adding 0.2% population annually since 1980, which translates to 1,791 new residents. These estimates do not include population increases associated with major redevelopment in the Touhy Triangle area.



Destination Market Shed *CMAP Population History and Forecast*

The destination market shed can be used as an indicator for employment in the market shed. In comparison with adjacent MD-N stations Morton Grove and Edgebrook, the potential Niles station had the highest employment in 2010 with 17,655 workers. Employment within the destination rider market sheds has fallen significantly in both Niles and Morton Grove—an annualized 1.4% since 1980.

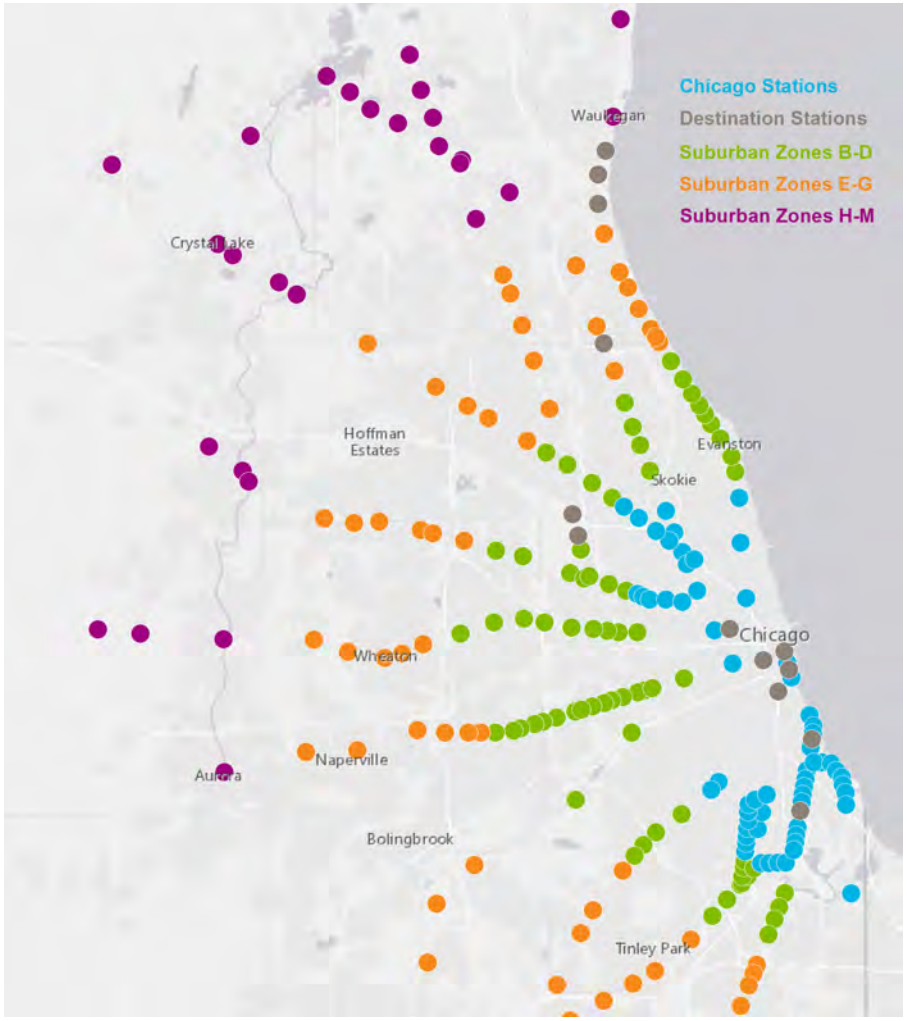


Forecasts show growth for both the potential origin and destination markets in the Niles market shed*

* *The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) creates population and employment forecasts for the Chicago region. Their models use a economic-demographic method that links regional population to projected employment growth. Learn more at:* ***datahub.cmap.illinois.gov/dataset/2050-forecast-of-population-households-and-employment***

MARKET ABSORBTION

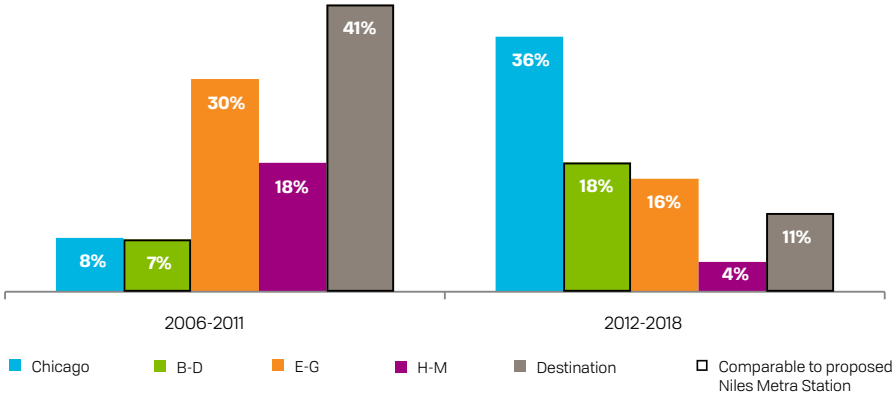
Metra Station Locations by Category



A fundamental consideration of the potential market for a new station in Niles is the market's capacity to absorb and support new development that occurs in the station's market area. To gain better insight into this key question, the development trends in the Chicago area were analyzed from several different perspectives. The map to the left organizes all Metra Stations into five categories. **The proposed Niles Metra Station falls into the B-D category, and also potentially the Destination category.**

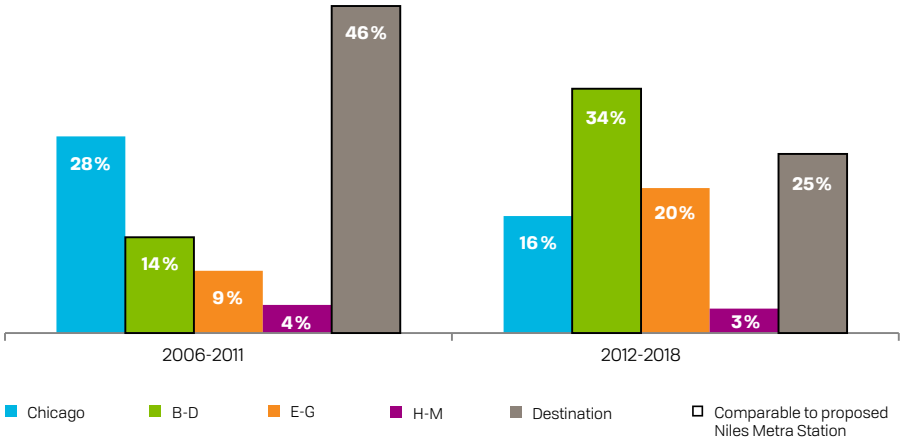
Share of Total Office Development
in Half-mile Metra Station Areas

Comparing more recent trends with earlier development patterns, we see that office development within a half mile of Metra stations in the near suburbs has more than doubled, from 7% in 2006-2012 to 18% in 2012-2018.



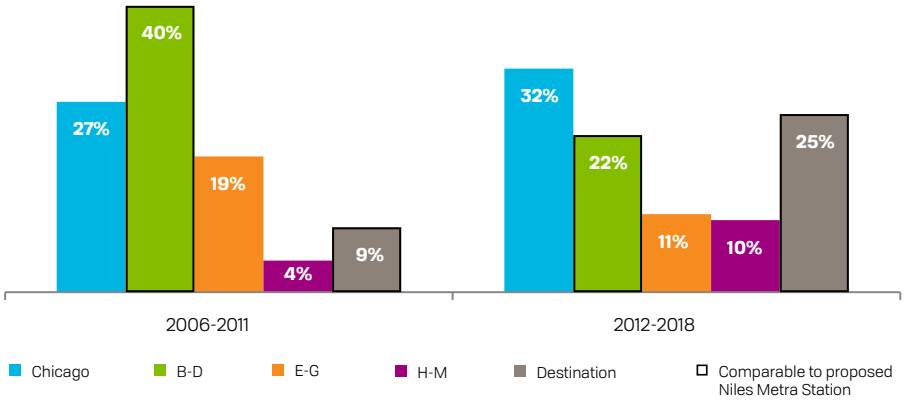
Share of Total Multifamily Development
in Half-mile Metra Station Areas

The multi-family market has also grown significantly in Suburban Zone B-D station areas, suggesting increased support for suburban higher-density residential transit oriented development (TOD).



Share of Total Retail Development
in Half-mile Metra Station Areas

Though retail development across U.S. markets has slowed, station areas in the near suburbs still captured about a third of development since 2006.



COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY

Extensive public and stakeholder outreach activities were conducted throughout the Feasibility Study effort using a variety of channels, including a project website, social media, an online survey, stakeholder meetings and a public open house. Stakeholders included local employers, Village of Skokie, Metra, and Pace. Overall input received was supportive of developing a Niles station.

ONLINE SURVEY

The Proposed Niles Metra Station Feasibility Study Survey was opened to the public in May 2018 and closed in October 2018. In that time, a total of 993 responses were collected. These responses include:

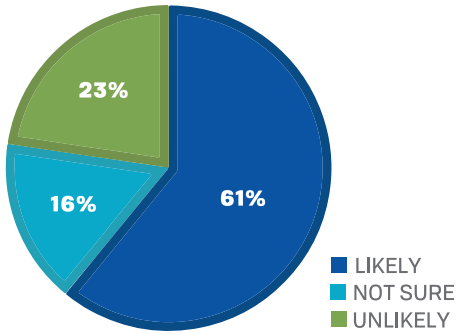
531 PEOPLE WHO **WORK** IN NILES,SKOKIE, OR THE SURROUNDING AREA

571 PEOPLE WHO **LIVE** IN NILES,SKOKIE, OR THE SURROUNDING AREA

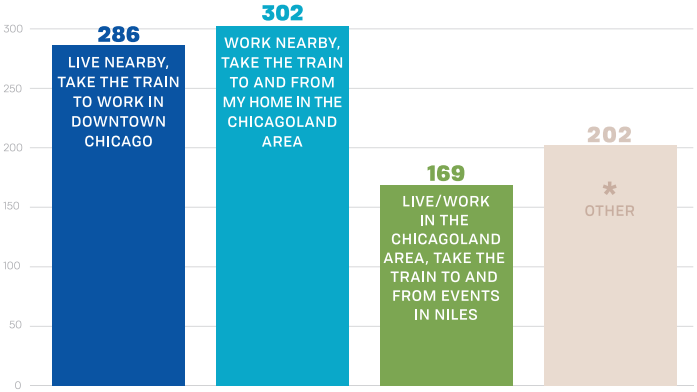
SURVEY RESULTS

If a new Milwaukee District North Line (MD-N) station were added between Touhy Ave. and Howard St. on Lehigh Ave., how likely would you be to use this station?

61% ARE LIKELY TO USE A STATION ADDED IN THIS LOCATION



If you were to use a train station at this location, how would you best describe your origin and destination?



* OTHER RESPONSES INCLUDED:

- LIVE/WORK NEARBY, WOULD TAKE THE TRAIN DOWNTOWN FOR EVENTS
- WOULD TAKE THE TRAIN DOWNTOWN TO CONNECT TO AMTRAK/CTA
- WOULDN'T TAKE THE TRAIN

If a station were added at this location, how are you likely to access the station?

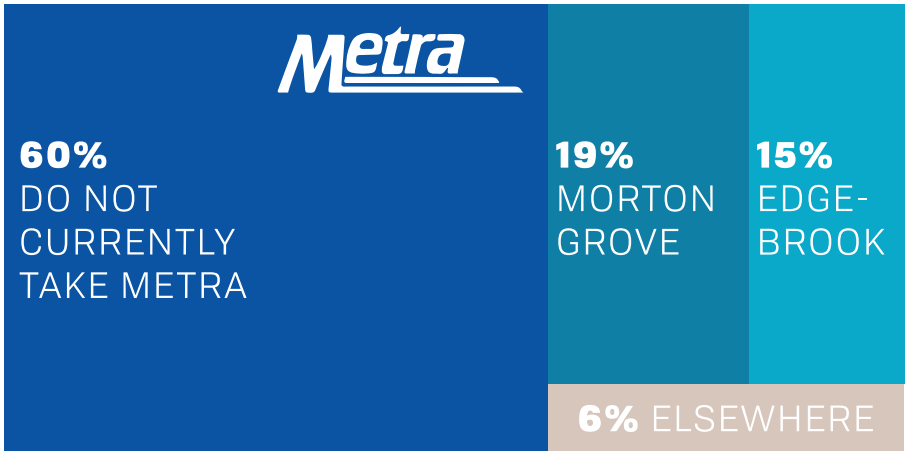
How likely would you be to ride a bike to the proposed Metra station if there were a bike route/ bike lane leading to the station?

Of those who indicated they are likely to use a station at this location, the percentage of likely bikers increases to 48%.

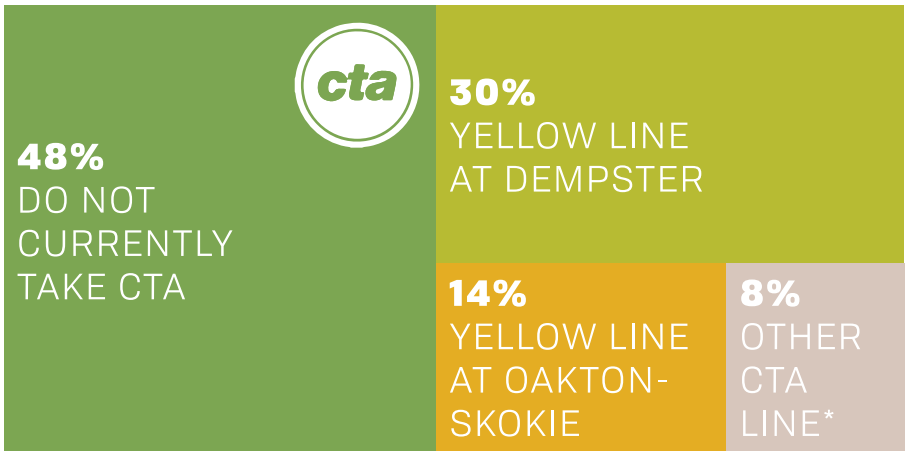
WHILE **93%** OF RESPONDENTS INDICATED THEY **DO NOT CURRENTLY RIDE THE NILES FREE BUS**

59% INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD BE LIKELY TO **RIDE A FREE BUS SHUTTLE** TO/FROM THE STATION IF IT WERE AN OPTION

Do you currently take Metra? If yes, which station do you use?



Do you currently take CTA? If yes, which station do you use?



* OTHER RESPONSES INCLUDED: BLUE LINE, RED LINE, BROWN LINE, AND CTA BUS

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The team received many messages through the project website. Below is a small sampling of some of the messages received:

"Not sure how I feel, need to see proposed location and the changes and the effects it would have on traffic."

"I used to ride Metra from the Morton Grove station. I would like to but Metra makes it very difficult for me. There is limited parking! This is the main issue."

"I strongly support a new Metra Milwaukee District North Line commuter station erected near Touhy Avenue. We have many people in the Shure building who need that option and will create revenue for Metra as well. If I had this option, I would totally take the train in to work."

"I would hope the traffic signal would be programmed to behave the same as Lehigh and Devon to give Lehigh the "green" when the train is in the station."

"Howard and Touhy are already overcrowded especially when trains pass to/from Dempster and Devon. Several freight trains also use the same tracks and often stop which totally blocks traffic."

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHTS: KEY TAKEWAYS

To best understand the needs and concerns of employers in the area, the project team conducted a series of interviews with large employers within a close vicinity of the station. The following is a summary of key themes from those conversations.

Ability to Recruit Talent

Many of the employers consulted expressed challenges associated with recruitment. Employers whose professional workforce is largely comprised of millennials noted that many young employees and recruits live in the city and do not want to own a car. The ability to advertise a nearby Metra station would be valuable in employee recruitment and retainment.

Benefits of Redevelopment

Many stakeholders were eager for elements of the Touhy Triangle plan to come to fruition, and enthusiastic about the train as a catalyst for that development. The potential for an upscale hotel in the Triangle was met with great interest from all of the stakeholders interviewed. Expanded entertainment options that could come with new development, such as bars, restaurants, and programmed open space, were also seen as a benefit to local employers and their employees.

Variety of Uses for Train

Employees using a nearby Metra Station for their commute was discussed as a key benefit for business owners, but not the only benefit discussed. Business owners expressed interest in using a nearby station to go downtown for company events and client outings. Additionally, a Metra Station would make Niles-area businesses more accessible for out of town clients who would prefer to stay in Downtown Chicago.

Plans to Stay in Niles

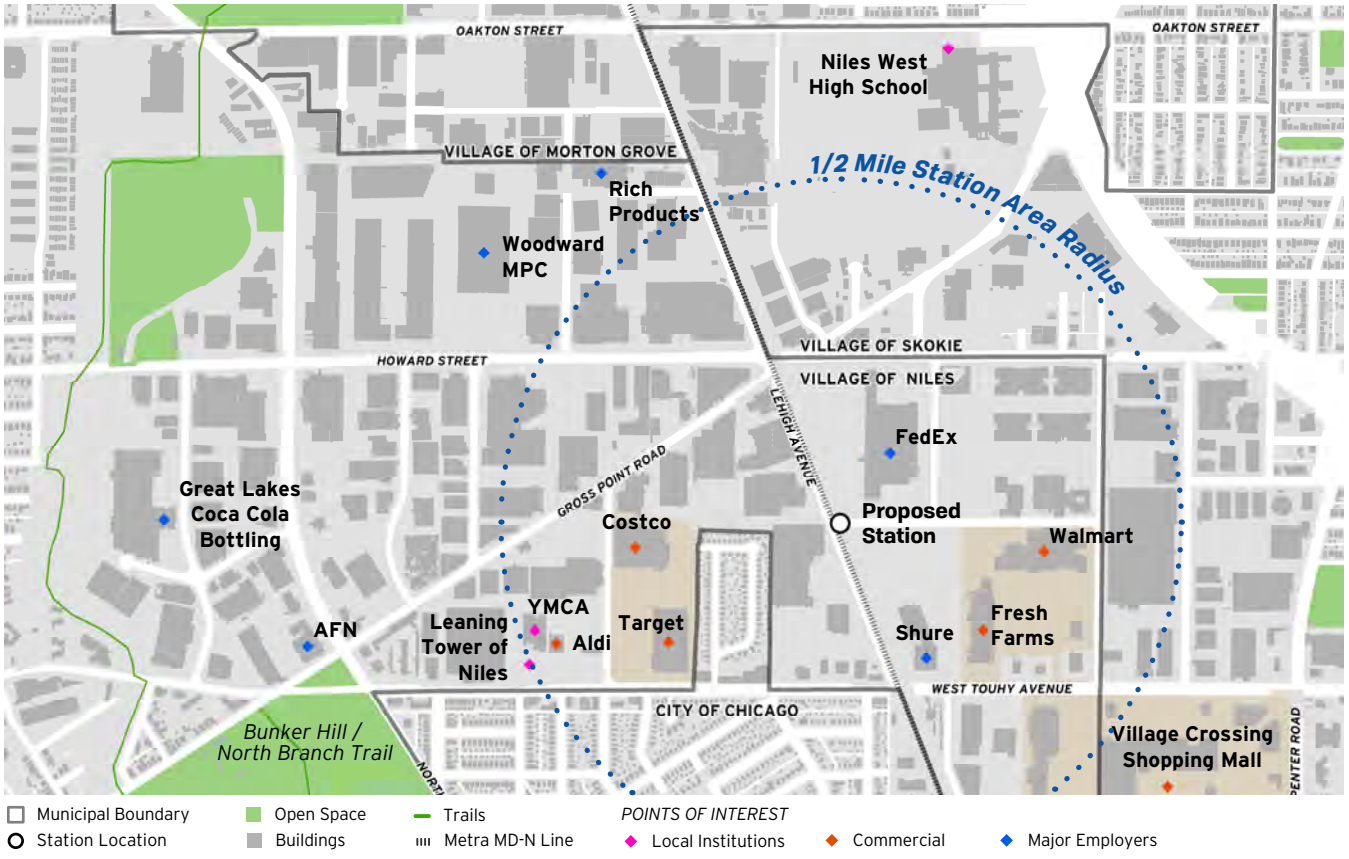
Of the local employers consulted, none expressed any intention of leaving Niles, largely due to recent investments made in company facilities. While some businesses indicated that their location in Niles was difficult for recruitment, others noted that much of their skilled workforce lives in the Niles, Skokie, and Morton Grove area, and that their location in Niles is a benefit to those workers.

THE LAST MILE CHALLENGES

Many of the major employers and institutions near the proposed Niles Metra Station are further than a half mile from the station. Providing connections between the station and these sites will be critical — this connection is often referred to as the "last mile" and is a common issue in transportation planning efforts. Strategies for improved connections could include:

- Modifications of existing bus routes, including the Niles Free Bus
- Improved pedestrian infrastructure and connections
- Other services, such as employee shuttles, Pace employee vanpools, Uber/Lyft, and other emerging transportation services

Points of Interest Surrounding the Proposed Niles Station



STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT

The Niles Metra Station is envisioned as a gateway to a district — the marker that you have arrived. It will serve as a meeting place and a destination for both local residents and the businesses that call the area home. The station area will set the stage for a new vision of Niles—what it is and what it can be.

Bird's Eye Illustration of Envisioned Station and Surrounding Transit-Oriented Development (view looking west from Jarvis Avenue)

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONCEPT

The original 2016 Touhy Triangle Plan introduced a concept for residential development in the northeast area of the Touhy Triangle based on the possibility of a new Metra Station in the area.

In the context of this Metra Feasibility Study, the potential for future transit-oriented development in this area has been studied in greater detail. The new updated plan shown on the facing page outlines a vision for a denser and more walkable, mixed-use development to support the new Metra Station. Development near the station would include commuter amenities such as covered parking, a "kiss-n-ride" plaza, and public open space. Key features of the plan are outlined below.

Concept Plan Notes

AREA I

5-7 STORY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
123 surface parking spaces,
211 internal spaces

- **A 6 to 7-Story Residential**
  - 130 to 150 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)
- **B 5 to 6-Story Residential**
  - 52 to 65 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)
- **C 5 to 6-Story Residential**
  - 76 to 95 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)

AREA II

5-7 STORY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
79 surface parking spaces,
263 internal spaces

- **D 5 to 6-Story Residential**
  - 54 to 68 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)
- **E 5 to 6-Story Residential**
  - 80 to 100 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)
- **F 6 to 7-Story Residential**
  - 70 to 84 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)
  - 1/2 acre corner open space & gateway plaza
- **G 5 to 6-Story Residential**
  - 60 to 75 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)

AREA III

5-7 STORY RESIDENTIAL & MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT, TOWNHOMES, AND COMMUNITY GREEN
180 surface parking spaces,
387 internal spaces
130 commuter parking spaces

- **H 5 to 6-Story Residential**
  - 72 to 90 units (± 1,000 sf typ.) each
- **I 5 to 6-Story Residential**
  - 88 to 110 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)
- **J 5 to 6-Story Residential**
  - 54 to 68 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)
- **K 6-Story Residential**
  - 70 apartments (± 1,000 sf typ.)
  - 19 to 28 'wrapped' townhomes / liner units
- **L Community Green Space (1 acre)**
- **M 6 to 7-Story Mixed-Use**
  - 5,000 sf retail with corner plaza
  - 106 - 128 units (± 1,000 sf typ.)
  - 10 additional townhomes
  - 130 Commuter parking spaces

AREA IV

6-7 STORY MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCIAL ANCHOR, AND NEW METRA STATION
150 internal residential parking spaces
276 commercial surface parking spaces
440 commuter parking spaces

- **N 6 to 7-Story Mixed-Use**
  - 10,000 sf retail with corner plaza
  - 102 - 128 apartments (± 1,000 sf typ.)
  - Transit plaza with 'kiss-n-ride' area
- **O 1-Story Commercial Anchor & Outlot Development**
  - 66,500 square feet combined
- **P New Metra Station**
  - New station house & drop-off areas
  - ADA accessible tunnel

Envisioned Metra Station Area Transit-Oriented Development Concept Plan

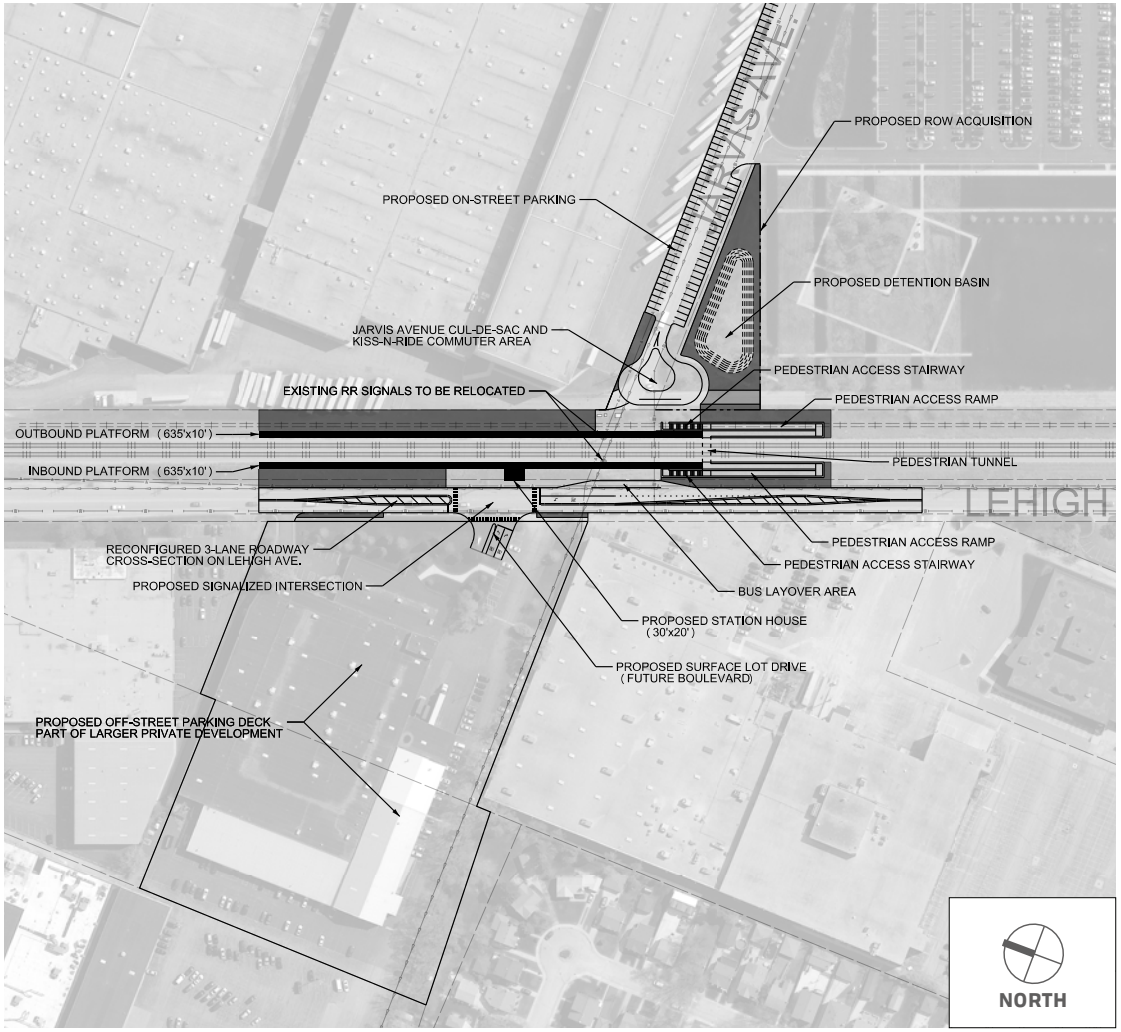
METRA STATION FACILITIES

Based on the recommended station location where Jarvis Avenue dead-ends on the east side of the MD-N tracks, an initial station site plan was prepared that identified and located essential Metra Station facilities. In addition to demonstrating overall feasibility and functionality of the proposed station, the concept plan shown to the right also serves as the basis for capital costs estimates identified later in this document and detailed in the formal report. Note that some of the assumed plan elements may change as the area develops, and the station is more fully integrated into adjoining land uses.

Key elements of the proposed station include:

- ***New station house on inbound (west) side of tracks, adjacent to Lehigh Avenue.***
- ***Two 635 foot long platforms***
- ***ADA accessible pedestrian tunnel with ramps***
- ***Relocation of existing railroad signals***
- ***New parking areas on both east and west sides of tracks. The primary parking area on the west side of Lehigh would rely on surface parking in the near term, but could be integrated into new TOD opportunities in the future.***
- ***Roadway improvements on Jarvis and Lehigh Avenues, including bike and pedestrian safety enhancements and amenities.***

Proposed Metra Station Facilities Concept Plan



TRAVEL DEMAND & IMPACTS

TRAVEL DEMAND

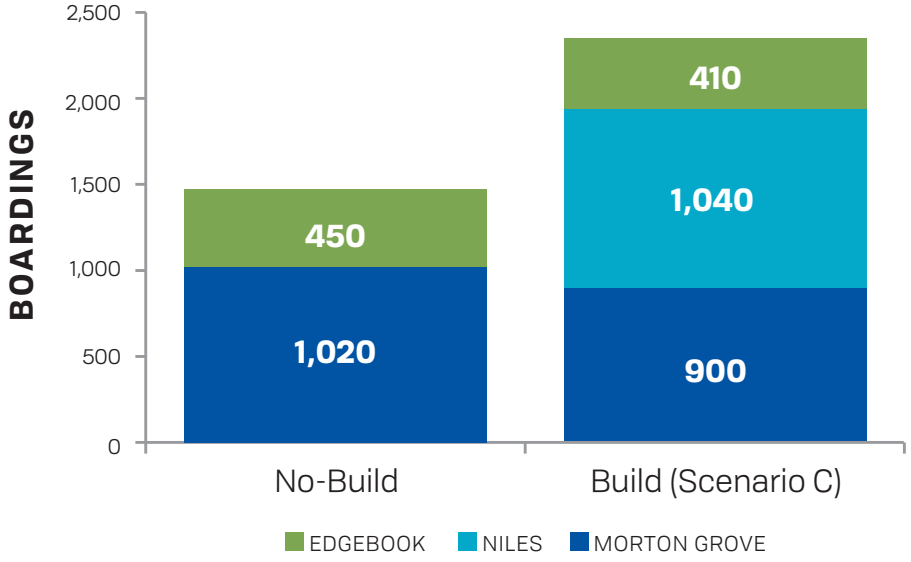
Based on an assessment of market and ridership conditions, the project team ran a series of analyses to estimate the potential use of the proposed Niles Metra Station. Two methodologies were used to forecast station boardings: the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) STOPS model and a regression analysis. The Niles station weekday boardings ranged between 700 and 1,380 in 2040. By comparison, the median Metra station attracted 422 weekday boardings based on a 2016 Metra passenger count. Some diversion of boardings from Morton Grove (-12%) and Edgebrook (-9%) were projection as part of these estimates.

Anticipated 2040 Boardings: 1,040 PER DAY

Relative to other Metra Stations: TOP 20%

2040 Average Modeled Boardings by Station

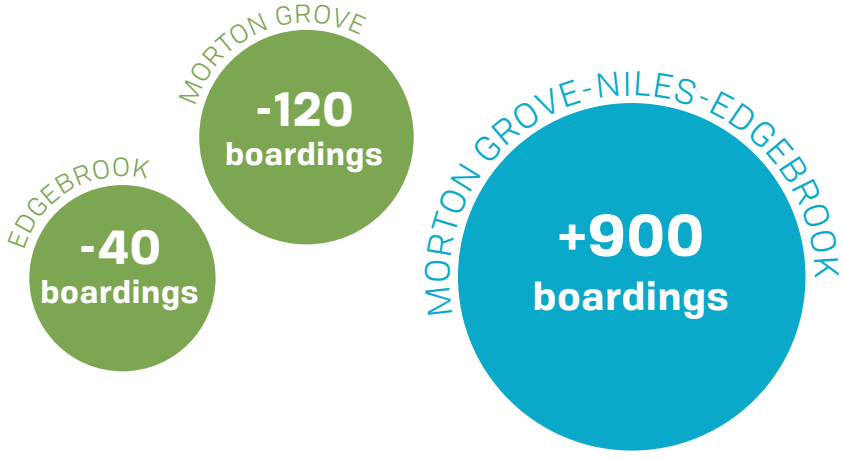
TOD Plan Build versus No-Build Comparison



RAILROAD OPERATIONAL IMPACTS

The analysis also looked at potential impacts of a Niles Metra Station on commute times, ridership at other stations, and on Metra, Amtrak and freight systems as a whole. The additional time required to stop and start MD-N trains at the Niles Station would add approximately two minutes of travel time. This added time could cause some current MD-N passengers to decide to use other Metra lines and other modes instead, although **the net change in MD-N ridership including the Niles station would be positive.** There would be no discernible impacts to current freight and Amtrak services.

Impact of Niles Station on Current MD-N Ridership



NEGLIGIBLE

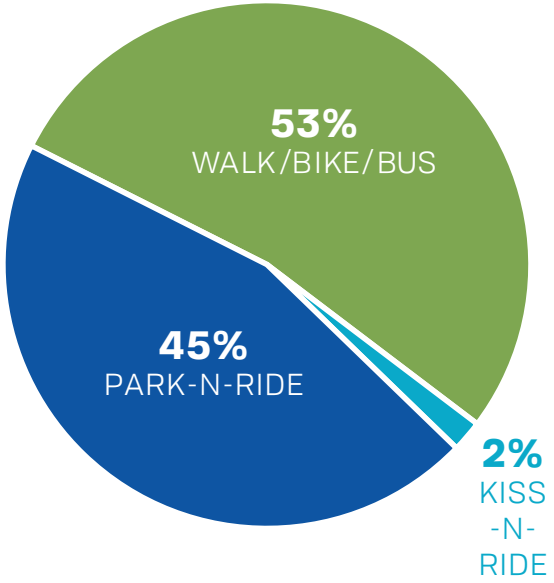
impacts on Metra, Amtrak, CTA Yellow Line, or Freight Service

ACCESS & SERVICE IMPACTS

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) encompasses the creation of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, residential and mixed use development centered around transit. This type of living arrangement can potentially reduce driving by up to 85%.

Analysis indicates that based on the TOD designs envisioned for the Touhy Triangle, **550 out of the 1,040 anticipated riders in 2040 would walk, bike, or take a bus to the proposed station.**

The following proposed schedule was developed with the goal of providing regular service for Niles riders and maximizing the number of suburban riders who could use the Niles station, as well as of limiting travel time increases and avoiding disruption of express service.



Proposed Schedule
MD-N Weekday Trains by Service Period

	INBOUND		OUTBOUND			
Service Period*	MD-N	Niles	MD-N	Niles	MD-N	Niles
AM Peak	12	6	5	5	**17**	**11**
Midday	7	7	6	6	**13**	**13**
PM Peak	6	4	13	6	**19**	**10**
Evening	6	6	6	6	**12**	**12**
Total	**31**	**23**	**30**	**23**	**61**	**46**

**SERVICE PERIODS (based on downtown terminal time):*
AM Peak *Start of service to 9:15 AM* ***Midday*** *9:16 AM to 3:29 PM* ***PM Peak*** *3:30 PM to 6:45 PM* ***Evening*** *6:45 PM to end of service*

TRAFFIC IMPACTS

Many community members voiced concerns about the impact the station would have on area traffic. A level of service analysis was conducted to study how additional traffic of those going to and from the station would impact traffic on Howard St, Touhy Ave, and Lehigh Ave. The preliminary conclusions of this analysis indicated that **the proposed Niles station would not over-burden the existing roadway system to adversely affect level of service (LOS).** The estimated additional traffic generated by the station in comparison to current roadway traffic volumes would be minimal. The impacts on traffic due to additional railroad crossing gate downtown would also be minimal. The Niles station would add between 1% and 2% to the total time gates would be in the down position during the AM and PM peak hours. The tables to the right outline these key findings.

It should be noted that these numbers relate only to forecasted users of the station. The impacts associated with development that could be planned with, or occur from, the station has not factored into this analysis.

Estimated Gate Downtime Comparison

AM Peak: 7-7:59am

	AT TOUHY	AT HOWARD
Existing Trains Without Niles Station		
Total Gate Downtime	6.75 min	6.75 min
% of Total Gate Downtime	11.3% of hour	11.3% of hour
Trains Including Niles Station		
Total Gate Downtime	7.58 min	8 min
% of Total Gate Downtime	12.6% of hour	13.3% of hour

PM Peak: 5-5:59pm

	AT TOUHY	AT HOWARD
Existing Trains Without Niles Station		
Total Gate Downtime	7.5 min	7.5 min
% of Total Gate Downtime	12.5% of hour	12.5% of hour
Trains Including Niles Station		
Total Gate Downtime	8.33 min	8.75 min
% of Total Gate Downtime	13.9% of hour	14.6% of hour

STORMWATER IMPACTS

An initial review of storm water impacts associated with new impervious areas identified the need for detention areas on both east and west of the rail tracks.

REQUIRED STORMWATER DETENTION

2.5 acre-feet

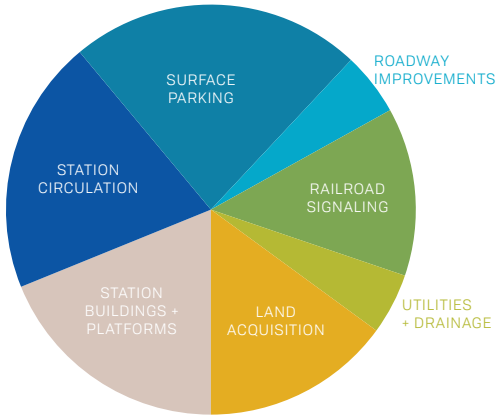
Detention Can Be Achieved Through

- ***Surface Detention Areas, such as vegetated basins and wetlands.***
- ***Underground Vaults***
- ***Low-Impact Development (LID) Techniques and Sustainable Infrastructure, such as rain gardens, bio-swales, and permeable paving.***

CAPITAL COSTS

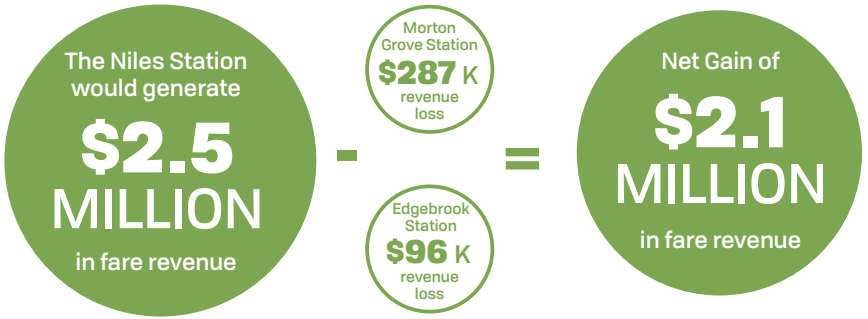
Various capital improvements associated with a new station were identified and quantified, and these quantities were used as the basis for estimating investment requirements. In 2018 dollars, the estimated capital cost to construct the station and related improvements totaled $31.1 million. Operational and maintenance costs were estimated at $230,000 per year, of which about 80% would be Metra's responsibility and the Village of Niles would be responsible for the remaining 20%.

TOTAL CAPITAL COSTS ESTIMATE
$31.1 MILLION



FARE REVENUE

The Niles Station would generate nearly $2.5 million in annual fare revenue based on estimated passenger use and 2018 fare levels. Assuming a decline of station boardings at Morton Grove and Edgebrook, the net result will still be a positive revenue of $2.1 million in overall fare revenue. This revenue would be seen by Metra and would more than cover the operations and maintenance associated with a new station. Additional revenue from Metra parking and any leased retail or vending space in the station area would go to the Village of Niles. Other opportunities to recapture value generated from new development may also exist.



POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

The Feasibility Study identified some potential funding or financing programs that could be considered to secure funding for the new station.

- **FTA Capital Investment Grants**
- **US DOT Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)**
- **CMAP Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)**
- **CMAP Surface Transportation Program (STP)**
- **Local Value Capture Opportunities**
  - Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
  - Benefit Assessment District
  - Sales Transaction Tax
  - Joint Development

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES

CONNECTIVITY WITH SKOKIE

Downtown Skokie is within a mile and a half of the proposed Niles Metra Station. Though there is no direct bus route between Downtown Skokie and the proposed station, the Niles station would be approximately a half mile closer than the Morton Grove station, and more direct by bike—about a 10 minute ride.

While the CTA Yellow Line is an option for Skokie residents, travel times from the area to Downtown are significantly shorter via Metra, as shown in the table below. Travel times for Metra from the proposed Niles Station to Downtown range from 25-35 minutes, while travel times from the Oakton-Skokie Yellow Line to Downtown range from 43-55 minutes.

Comparing Local Travel Times

Between Metra and CTA

METRA *NILES STATION - UNION STATION*	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	AVERAGE
Inbound	31 min	35 min	**33 min**
Outbound	25 min	29 min	**27 min**

CTA RAIL *SKOKIE - DOWNTOWN*	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	AVERAGE
Oakton-Skokie to Howard	7 min	7 min	**7 min**
Transfer	1 min	8 min	**5 min**
Howard to Monroe (Red or Purple Line)	35 min	40 min	**38 min**
Total Estimated Travel Time	**43 min**	**55 min**	**50 min**

CONSTRAINTS AT NEARBY STATIONS

The stations closest to the proposed Niles Metra Station on the MD-N have limited parking capacity and limited room for expansion. Commuter parking at the Morton Grove MD-N station, directly north of the proposed Niles station, is at 94% capacity. Similarly, parking at the Edgebrook MD-N station to the south is at 88% capacity. If a Niles station were to be added, it could help to ease congestion at these stations.

Nearby stations also have limited opportunities for development and thereby increase density surrounding the station. The proposed Niles station has strong redevelopment potential near the station, including the ability to develop parking to meet station area needs.

Parking Capacity and Use at Nearby MD-N Stations

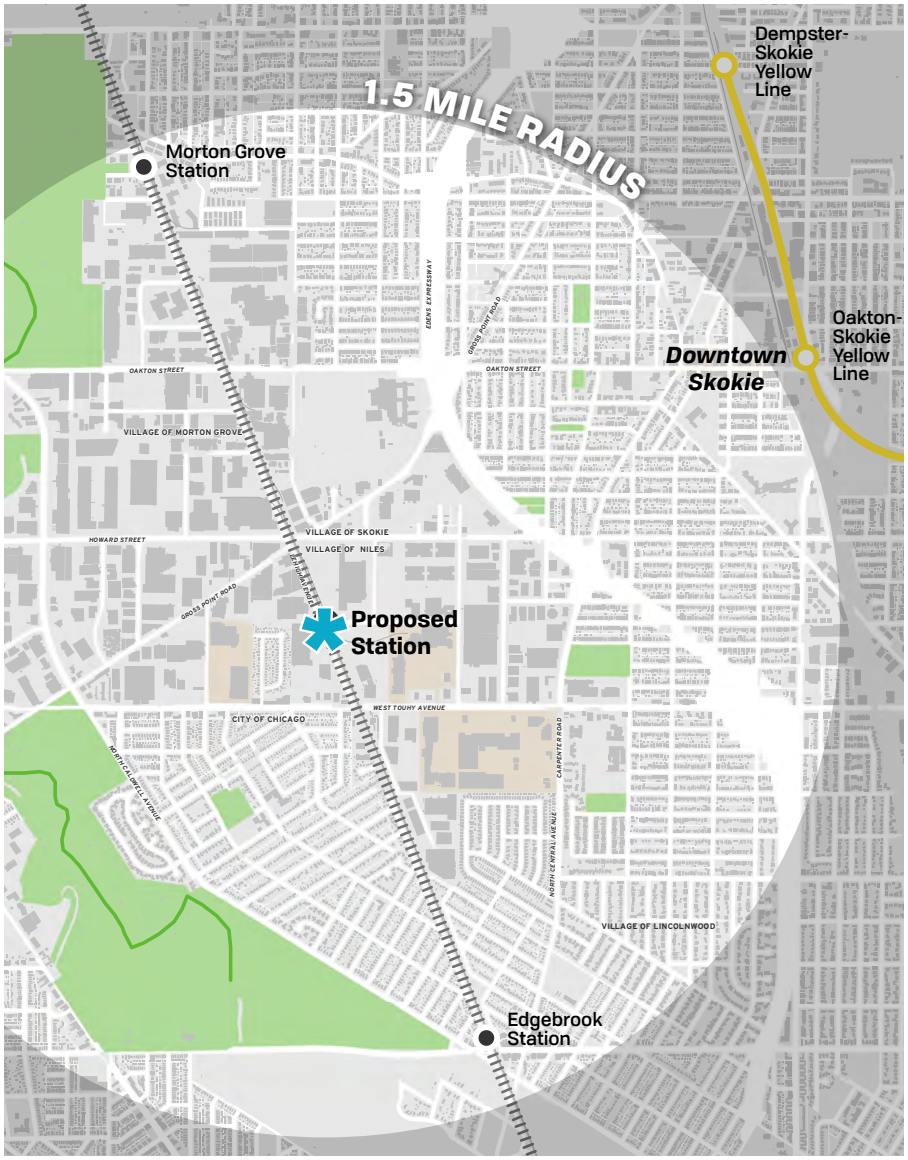
STATION	PARKING CAPACITY	PARKING USE	% OF PARKING USED
Golf	37	28	**76%**
Morton Grove	471	441	**94%**
Edgebrook	199	175	**88%**
Forest Glen	103	71	**69%**

IN CONCLUSION

The technical analyses performed indicate that a Niles station would be feasible and would have all of the criteria needed to be highly successful as both an important regional transit connection and catalyst for future economic development. Key takeaways of the study are outlined below.

Metra will review the findings of the Feasibility Study and make a determination on whether station planning efforts can proceed, however the ultimate decision to implement the station rests with the Niles Village Board. This includes a commitment to Metra to secure capital funding for construction and an agreement to fund station and parking operation and maintenance costs.

- ***A new Niles Metra Station would have minor impacts on surrounding traffic and Metra operations.***
- ***With an estimated 1,040 boardings per day by 2040, the station would be in the top 20% of all Metra stations.***
- ***The station would serve as a destination for up to 3,660 station area workers, as well as an origin for residents of Niles, Skokie, and Chicago, and would provide better access between urban and suburban areas.***
- ***The proposed station area is well poised for new development. Transit oriented development surrounding the station could be compact and walkable, reducing the dependence on driving.***
- ***A new station could help to alleviate parking capacity issues at nearby stations.***
- ***Community survey results show the majority of respondents in favor of the proposed station.***
- ***A range of funding programs could be used to finance the improvements required to implement the station, including significant value capture opportunities from new development.***



The new station would play an important part in the local transit network.