

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metra Board approves locomotive purchase

Contract calls for 15 remanufactured locomotives, with options for 27 more

CHICAGO (Feb. 20, 2019) – The Metra Board of Directors today approved a \$70.9 million contract to purchase 15 remanufactured locomotives to begin to replace Metra’s aging fleet. The contract with Progress Rail Locomotives of La Grange includes options to buy up to 27 additional locomotives, if funding is available.

“Our goals with this locomotive purchase are to increase reliability and improve the state of good repair on our system,” said Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski. “These like-new locomotives will be replacing some of the oldest locomotives in our fleet, and we would expect to see a significant increase in reliability as these newer locomotives are introduced.”

Progress Rail will take existing EMD SD70MAC freight locomotives and upgrade and configure them for passenger use. All components will either be refurbished, upgraded or new. The newly remanufactured locomotives will be designated as SD70MACH locomotives.

About 70 percent of Metra’s current fleet of 147 locomotives are rated in marginal or poor condition. The introduction this year of 24 used but new-to-Metra locomotives that were purchased from Amtrak will reduce that percentage to about 45 percent, and the addition of the remanufactured freight locomotives will reduce that percentage to 14 percent by 2023. Newer locomotives not only will increase reliability, but they will reduce operating costs, since the older locomotives are increasingly expensive to maintain and operate.

Metra’s RFP allowed companies to provide proposals for either new or remanufactured locomotives. Metra chose remanufactured locomotives primarily because it can buy more of them than new locomotives. A greater number of newer locomotives means Metra can replace a greater number of older locomotives and operate a greater number of trains with more reliable locomotives.

One big improvement will be in the traction motors, which deliver the power generated by the diesel engine to the wheels. The remanufactured locomotives will have AC traction motors, which are far more durable and reliable than the DC traction motors in Metra’s older locomotives. For example, Metra currently needs to replace about 160 DC traction motors annually. On Metra Electric cars, the oldest of which have had AC traction motors for 12 years, Metra has not had to change a single traction motor.

The remanufactured locomotives have a similar design to Metra's F59 locomotives so Metra will be able to use the same parts inventory and won't need different training and maintenance programs. There will be a 34 percent increase in horsepower. Another major upgrade is a microprocessor-controlled brake system.

The remanufactured locomotives will meet the Environmental Protection Agency's Tier 3 emissions standards. Replacing 42 of Metra's current locomotives that are rated Tier 0+ with 42 Tier 3 locomotives will eliminate 61 tons of nitrous oxide emissions annually – the equivalent to taking 6,600 cars off the road.

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About Metra

Metra is one of the largest and most complex commuter rail systems in North America, serving Cook, DuPage, Will, Lake, Kane and McHenry counties in northeastern Illinois. The agency provides service to and from downtown Chicago with 242 stations over 11 routes totaling nearly 500 route miles and approximately 1,200 miles of track. Metra operates nearly 700 trains and provides nearly 290,000 passenger trips each weekday.

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