



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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MAYOR JOHNSON, CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF AVIATION TO ROLL OUT 'PAPA BLU' COMMUNITY OUTREACH VEHICLE

The mobile effort will bring aviation education, careers and business opportunities to Chicago's 77 community areas.

CHICAGO - Mayor Brandon Johnson and Chicago's airports will take their aviation outreach efforts to the streets with the unveiling of "Papa Blu" today, the new, ADA-accessible community outreach bus from the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA).

The bus will debut at 79th Street and Maryland Avenue in the Chatham and Greater Grand Crossing communities during this summer's final "Take Back the Block" activation event, the anti-violence initiative hosted by the Mayor's Office and the Mayor's Office for Community Safety.

"Chicago's airports belong to the people of Chicago, and Papa Blu is a fresh new way we're making sure every neighborhood feels connected to the opportunities created by O'Hare and Midway International Airports," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "With two flight simulators on board, this bus isn't just a vehicle — it's a fun, hands-on way for young people to explore what it's like to be a pilot and imagine a future career in aviation. We're bringing these experiences and resources directly to Chicagoans where they live."

Living up to its name, the striking blue bus stretches 36 feet long and is wrapped in aviation-themed graphics featuring the Chicago skyline and the Ferris wheel at Navy Pier.

"Since becoming Commissioner, I've made it a top priority for the CDA to open more doors for Chicagoans, whether that's sparking a young person's interest in aviation or helping local entrepreneurs connect to opportunities at our airports," said **CDA Commissioner Michael McMurray**. "Papa Blu can act as a mobile gateway to the aviation industry, inspiring the next generation of pilots, flight attendants, engineers and innovators. I'm



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especially grateful to CDA First Deputy Commissioner Tracey H. Payne for her vision and leadership in making Papa Blu a reality.”

The centerpiece of the bus is a pair of flight simulators that will easily captivate the interest of kids and adults alike. With guidance from members of the CDA’s Workforce Development team, even the youngest visitors can experience a fun, hands-on introduction to aviation as they try their hand at flying a plane. The simulators are complemented by additional educational resources such as games and books that are designed to peak young peoples’ curiosity and inspire thoughts of future careers in the industry.

Papa Blu also offers resources tailored to high school and college students as well as mid-career professionals, such as information about job openings at O’Hare and Midway, internship opportunities, and aviation training programs. For small business entrepreneurs, the bus is equipped a wide range of materials, including assistance on how to certify one’s business, how to respond to requests for proposals, along with general information on the procurement process.

The CDA’s first community outreach bus, “Big Blu,” was unveiled in 2022 and has since made appearances at more than 65 local events. For more information, visit [FlyChicago.com/outreachvehicle](https://flychicago.com/outreachvehicle).

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