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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON SIGNS "SAFE AND SMOKE-FREE PUBLIC TRANSIT" EXECUTIVE ORDER

*The order directs City Departments to work with Sister Agencies to take immediate action to increase public safety and eliminate smoking on CTA trains.*

**CHICAGO** – Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson signed an executive order directing City Departments to take immediate actions to reduce smoking and to put forward recommendations for medium- and long-term solutions to the smoking problem. The Mayor is directing Chicago Police Department (CPD), Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), and the Mayor's Office to work collaboratively with Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) to aid its efforts to end smoking on public transit and enhance public safety measures.

"Smoking on our public transit system has got to stop, and I am directing our City's agencies and the Mayor's Office to work together to put an end to this activity," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Our public transit system is for all Chicagoans. We have parents taking their young children to school in the morning and seniors with respiratory issues who are inhaling smoke. This executive order calls for the same full-force-of-government approach that has resulted in historic reductions in crime to tackle this critical issue."

The Order directs CDPH and DFSS to partner with the CTA and explore possible areas of collaboration, including deployment of CDPH's Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement (CARE) teams and DFSS's Homeless Outreach and Prevention (HOP) teams to aid in the effort to curtail smoking on the trains. CDPH and DFSS are also directed to explore the feasibility of assembling a Transit Health Response Teams (THRT) comprised of Community Violence Interrupters and mental health professionals to engage smokers and offer on-site counseling, smoking cessation resources, and long-term treatment.

"CTA has a strong partnership with the Chicago Police Department and we are committed to moving forward with the anti-smoking initiatives we've undertaken," said **Acting CTA President Nora Leerhsen**. "We welcome additional collaboration



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to aid in addressing this issue. We are laser-focused on the quality of our riders' and employees' CTA travel experience."

"We are committed to strengthening safety across the CTA and addressing the concerns of transit passengers," said **Chicago Police Department Superintendent Larry Snelling**. "Our dedicated Public Transportation Section personnel will further these efforts in close partnership with our City and social service partners."

Exposure to second-hand smoke is a well-established risk factor for chronic respiratory illnesses, including asthma, COPD, emphysema, bronchitis, and pneumonia, and heightens risk for hospitalization, emergency care, and respiratory failure. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [found](#) there "is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS); even brief exposure can cause immediate harm." An estimated 68,000 K-12 student rides occur each weekday, exposing children to toxic carcinogens and particulates that raise asthma attacks, respiratory illness, and long-term health risks.

"Secondhand smoke is more than a nuisance—it's a serious threat to health, especially in enclosed spaces like trains," said **CDPH Commissioner Olusimbo "Simbo" Ige, MD, MS, MPH**. "Reducing smoking on public transit is a vital step toward protecting riders and transit workers. This executive order reflects the collaborative, citywide effort needed to prevent diseases like heart disease, stroke, emphysema, and lung cancer—and to ensure every Chicagoan can breathe easier, no matter where they live or work."

"The Department of Family and Support Services is committed to collaborating with Mayor Johnson and City partners on enhanced strategies that promote the health and safety of CTA riders and workers, including unhoused residents," said **Acting DFSS Commissioner Maura McCauley**.

City Departments are instructed to work with CTA to partner with schools, block clubs, faith leaders, and community-based organizations to:

- Co-create education campaigns on the risks of second-hand smoke;
- Reinforce the smoke-free policy;
- Invite families to community-oriented events that promote smoke-free public transit.

The Mayor has instructed his Intergovernmental Affairs team to work with legislators in Springfield to ensure there is adequate funding for CTA and regional transit and that funding includes resources to enforce the ban on smoking on public transit. The Mayor has also directed the Department of Finance to identify grant opportunities to aid these efforts.



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In 2024, CTA rail provided 127.5 million rides, an increase over 2023 of 9 percent. CTA buses provided 181.7 million rides, a year-over-year increase of 12 percent and the highest recovery rate of all modes at 77 percent of pre-pandemic levels. Overall CTA ridership for 2024 reached 309.2 million, a CTA systemwide increase of 11 percent. As service continues to improve, it is critical that the City take action to aid the CTA in their efforts to end smoking and increase public safety on public transit.

The full text of the Executive Order will be available [here](#).

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