CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY

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Chicago, Illinois 60661-1498
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October 15, 2025
Via: Email

Cook County
351 N. Austin Boulevard
Chicago, IL

Description: Lake Line Austin Station Project. HAER documentation to mitigate the demolition of a NRHP-eligible elevated rapid transit station.

Funding: (Federal) Surface Transportation Program

Contact: Erin Fiorini, CTA
efiorini@transitchicago.com
Director, Infrastructure Capital Program Oversight
567 W. Lake St.
Chicago, IL 60661

SHPO Log: #020040121

Constructed: 1961-1962

Dear Carey L. Mayer,

Per the Section III, A, 4, c, of the Memorandum of Agreement (8/2022) between the Federal Transit Administration and the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office Regarding the Line Lake Austin Station Project, please find a digital version of the complete HAER documentation recordation packet. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Fiorini
Director, Infrastructure Capital Program Oversight

LAKE LINE ELEVATED RAILWAY
(Austin Green Line Station)
351 N. Austin Boulevard
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER-IL-1211-A
HAER-IL-1211-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

LAKE STREET ELEVATED RAILWAY
LAKE LINE AUSTIN STATION

HAER No. IL- 1211-A

Location:	351 N. Austin Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60644 The primary stationhouse is located at latitude 41.887507, longitude -87.774375. The secondary stationhouse is located at latitude 41.887235, longitude -87.773415. These locations were obtained using Google Earth. There is no restriction on its release to the public.
Dates of Construction:	Construction began in 1960 and was completed in 1962.
Architect/Engineer/Builder:	Dittrich & Gibson Architects Alfred Benesch & Co., Engineers Kralovec & Best, Engineers M.A. Lombard and Son Co., General Contractors
Original Owner(s):	The Lake Street Elevated Railroad Company (LSER) was the original owner of the Lake Street "L" extension from Laramie Avenue to Harlem Avenue. The Chicago and North Western Railroad Company (C&NW) constructed and owned the ca. 1910 steel viaduct and concrete embankment, which allowed for the elevation of the Lake Street Extension. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) constructed and was the original owner of Austin Station.
Present Owner(s):	CTA continues to own and operate the Austin Station as part of its present-day Green Line. The facility includes the primary and secondary stationhouses, platform, protective canopy, and tracking. Union Pacific Railroad (UP) is the present owner of the steel viaduct that bridges over N. Austin Boulevard, concrete railroad embankment, and railroad right-of-way.
Present Use:	Rapid transit elevated railway station
Significance:	The Lake Line Austin Station (also known as Austin-Mason Station) is significant as part of an innovative modernization program of the early 1960s that replaced a 2.8-mile stretch of surface railway with an elevated extension built on an adjacent historic C& NW railroad embankment. The property is also important as one of five new

stations that expressed a Midcentury Modern design aesthetic and provided state-of-the-art features to promote safety and efficiency.

Historians: Julia Bachrach and Lawrence Shure

Project Information: This HAER documentation project was prepared pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800) to address Stipulation III.A.1 of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the Lake Line Austin Station Project (August 16, 2022), City of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. Fulfilling the goals of CTA's All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP) Strategic Plan, the Lake Line Austin Station Project replaces portions of the historic structure with new construction to make the station fully accessible and code compliant. The recordation project was undertaken in the fall of 2023 and winter of 2024 by CTA program manager employees Julia Bachrach (Julia Bachrach Consulting, LLC) and Lawrence Shure (CERA Solutions). Leslie Schwartz (Leslie Schwartz Photography) completed the photo documentation.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History:

1. **Dates of construction:** 1960-1962

2. **Architects:** Chicago architects Francis J. Dittrich and Bayard K. Gibson formed the partnership of Dittrich & Gibson Architects in 1946.[1] Registered in eight states, the firm specialized in the design of modern department stores and other commercial buildings. Although the office was not specifically known for transportation-related projects, Dittrich & Gibson produced plans to remodel a space in Chicago's Merchandise Mart as a reservations and sales center for Eastern Airlines in 1957.[2] The firm's work for CTA appears to have been limited to the five stations built along the Lake Street Elevated extension in the early 1960s.

   Francis Joseph Dittrich (1892-1973) was born and educated in Zlonice, Bohemia.[3] Having emigrated to the United States in 1912, he initially settled in Ohio. After

[1] George S. Koyle, ed., *American Architects Directory, Second Edition* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962), 172.
[2] "Eastern Air to Dedicate Ticket Unit," *Chicago Tribune*, November 17, 1957, A9.
[3] Daniel D. Droba, ed. *Czech and Slovak Leaders in Metropolitan Chicago: A Biographical Study of 300 Prominent Men and Women of Czech and Slovak Descent,* (Chicago: Slavonic Club of the University of Chicago, 1934) 11.

working as a designer and chief draftsman for Cleveland architect John William Cresswell Corbusier from 1913 to 1918, Dittrich moved to Chicago. He spent a few years in independent practice and then worked as a designer for the well-respected firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White for seven or eight years. From 1930 to 1936, Dittrich served as a principal associate in the office of Charles Wheeler Nicol & Associates.[4] He then worked as an architect for the Liquid Carbonic Corporation in Chicago prior to forming the partnership with Gibson.[5]

Born in Chicago, Bayard Kendall Gibson (1892-1964) received a degree in architecture from the Armour Institute (later renamed Illinois Institute of Technology) in 1913.[6] After working as a draftsman for various firms, Gibson opened his own office in 1919. Quite active through the 1920s, B.K. Gibson & Co. produced projects throughout the Midwest including the Central Cold Storage Building (no longer extant); Rowe Hotel in Grand Rapids, MI; Karcher Hotel in Waukegan, IL (listed in the NRHP),[7] Medical Arts Building, Grand Rapids, MI (now called Lofts Apartments, listed in the NRHP); and the Wicomico Hotel in Salisbury, MD (listed in the NRHP).[8] He also designed the Emerald Avenue Church in Chicago, a Presbyterian church in which he and his family were quite active.[9] Gibson took on remodeling projects and other small commissions during the lean Depression years.

The Dittrich & Gibson partnership dissolved in 1962, two years after Gibson had retired.[10] (Dittrich continued to practice for several more years with the firm of Dittrich, Neil, and Wennlund, Inc.)[11] During the decade-and-a-half in which it was active, the office designed numerous Modern buildings including large stores for Sears Roebuck & Co. in several states and a structure for the W.T. Raleigh Co. in Freeport, IL (with Stanley W. Howe of Monroe, WI). The firm's Chicago work includes the Crerar Memorial Presbyterian Church at 81st Street and Calumet Avenue and Nazareth Lutheran Church and 113th Street and Union Avenue.[12]

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[4] George S. Koyle, *American Architects Directory*, 172.
[5] U.S. Census Bureau, "Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940."
[6] Koyle, *American Architects Directory*, 246.
[7] Susan S. Benjamin, "Karcher Hotel," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* National Park Service, 2002.
[8] Salisbury Historic District Commission Hearing Notice, July 24, 2019, accessed August 11, 2023, https://salisbury.md/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/120-122-E-Market-Street-Wall-Mural.pdf.
[9] "Emerald Avenue Church Presbyterian Church as it Will Look When Completed," *Englewood Economist*, October 31, 1923, 13; Located at 6701 S. Emerald Street, the structure is now the Alpha Temple Baptist Church.
[10] "Obituary for Bayard K. Gibson," *Chicago Tribune,* July 29, 1964, A6.
[11] "Sears New Auto Center Opens Soon," *Berwyn Life*, November 13, 1966, p. 15.
[12] "Break Ground for New Crerar Church Today," *Chicago Tribune*, April 17, 1949, SW6.; and "Ground Broken Today for new $165,000 Church, *Chicago Tribune*, April 8, 1951, SW_A13.

3. **Builders, contractors, suppliers:**

General Contractor:	M.A. Lombard and Son Co., Alsip, IL
Consulting Engineers:	Alfred Benesch & Co., Chicago, IL
	Kralovec & Best, Chicago, IL
Metals Contractor:	Illinois Bronze Works, Chicago, IL
Stainless steel lettering:	Nelson-Harkins Industries, Chicago, IL
Railings:	Livers Bronze Co, Kansas City, MO
Concrete roofing/footings:	Ceco Steel Products Corp., Chicago, IL
Structural steel:	Vierling Steel Works, Chicago, IL
Concrete forms:	Midwest Concrete Form Co., Franklin Park, IL
	Simplex Industrial Forms, Inc., Rockford, IL
Curtain wall system:	Pittco Storefronts, Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co.
Glazed brick:	Darlington Brick, Darlington, PA
Water heaters:	Teter Inc, Chicago, IL
Fare collection and control:	Perey Turnstiles, Visifare Passemeter, New York, NY
Escalators:	Peelle Motorstair Division, Smithtown, NY
Roto Gate:	Perey Turnstiles, New York, NY
Water valves and basins:	Wade Iron Sanitary Manufacturing Co., Chicago, IL
Glass fiber reinforced panels:	Kemlite Corp., Joliet, IL
Doors and frames:	Ceco Steel Products Corp, Chicago, IL
Mercury luminaires:	Day-Brite Lighting, Inc., St. Louis, MO
Air handling and distribution:	Loren Cook Company, Berea, OH
Canopy framing:	Rosman Iron Works, Inc., Franklin Park, IL
Platform curtain walls:	American Art Metals, Co., Atlanta, GA
Porcelain panels:	Midwest Architectural Porcelain Co., Chicago, IL
Rolling steel doors:	Tahney Bros., Chicago, IL

4. **Original plans and construction:**
In 1961 consulting architects Dittrich & Gibson and engineers Alfred Benesch & Company and Kralovec & Best produced a set of more than 100 plans and drawings for the Lake Street Track Elevation Project. These included structural, electrical, engineering, and signage plans for the five new stations and their associated platforms and canopies. (Dittrich & Gibson were responsible for architectural plans and drawings, Alfred Benesch & Company produced structural drawings, and Kralovec & Best created sewer, water, electrical, and ventilation plans.) CTA later transferred the original plans and drawings to microfiche. CTA also has microfiche copies of shop drawings that were produced by various subcontractors for steel

details, concrete formwork, etc. of the original construction. (Originals have not been located for any of these materials.)

5. **Modifications:**

a. Secondary (Mason Avenue) Stationhouse (1973-1992)

In 1973, the secondary (Mason Avenue) stationhouse was converted to an exit-only structure.[13] This was rarely used and difficult to maintain. In the summer of 1987, the structure was removed from customer use. At that time, CTA boarded up the glass and steel enclosure at the east end of the platform and closed off its associated stairway.[14]

In 1991, CTA removed the secondary stationhouse's entire curtain wall system and replaced it with infill brick. Because of the difficulty in matching the original gray glazed brick, non-matching red brick was utilized instead.[15] The project included the installation of a solid metal security door on the structure's west facade. By 1992, the stairwell enclosure on the east end of the platform, which had served as the N. Mason Avenue exit, was removed. At the platform level, the stair tunnel was covered over, and a metal safety gate was installed.[16] This configuration remains.

b. Green Line Rehabilitation (1994-1996)

Between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, ridership on the Lake Line Elevated dropped substantially, and its infrastructure fell into decline. In fact, by 1992 some sections of the line were so deteriorated that they became public safety hazards. As a cost-saving measure, CTA administrators considered replacing portions of the Lake Line Elevated with express bus service.[17] This idea was not well received by the public. So, instead, CTA launched a plan to rehabilitate and reconfigure the elevated line. Renamed the Green Line, the Lake Line and Englewood-Jackson Park Line were linked via the Loop Elevated, and plans were developed for a $300 million project to improve and renovate the line. The entire Green Line was closed from 1994 to 1996 during the renovation project.

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[13] Graham Garfield, "Austin (6000W/400N)," www.Chicago "L".org, accessed August 11, 2023, https://www.chicago-l.org/stations/austin-lake.html.

[14] C. Stevens, Safety Department Memorandum to Building and Grounds Maintenance, July 14, 1987, CTA Facility Planning Station and Bus Files.

[15] G.F. Brady, Memorandum, February 8, 1991, CTA Facility Planning Station and Bus Files.

[16] Harold R. Hirsch, Memorandum to G. Brady, January 30, 1991, CTA Facility Planning Station and Bus Files.

[17] William Presecky, "CTA may shut parts of aging Lake St. 'L'," *Chicago Tribune*, October 7, 1992.

Green Line plans had initially called for making the Lake Line Austin Station vertically accessible with such improvements as a ramp and elevator and reconfiguring the primary stationhouse.[18] Due to funding constraints, however, this proposal did not move forward. Instead, CTA made modest improvements that repaired and upgraded the existing stationhouse and platform. The work that was undertaken included building new wooden platforms, substantially reconstructing the escalator, and making facade renovations, such as replacing original glass and porcelain panels with safety glass. The project provided updated fare control equipment and machines as well as new graphics and signage. In addition, new emergency/maintenance stairs were built to provide CTA employees with improved access from the platform to the track level. [19]

c. Additional Changes (1999-2007)

The CTA made additional improvements to the Lake Line Austin Station in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Several tactile Braille signs were installed in the stationhouse entryway and on the platform in 1999.[20] The platform canopy's metal roofing, which then had small fiberglass skylights, was replaced with standard corrugated metal roofing in 2007.[21]

B. Historical Context

Introduction

During the late nineteenth century, numerous private companies formed to build Chicago's earliest elevated railway lines. These entrepreneurial firms sought to make their fortunes by developing an innovative transportation system that would address the needs of the burgeoning city and adjacent suburban areas. Among them, the Lake Street Elevated Railway Company was chartered in 1888. Elevated railroad technologies were new, permissions had to be obtained from many property owners to build on and over their land, and substantial financing and political support were needed to construct the Lake Street "L." These and other obstacles delayed the firm's progress. Legislative issues prompted the company to organize as a new corporation under a slightly different name in 1892—the Lake Street Elevated Railroad Company (LSER). The following year, the LSER initiated "L" service from downtown Chicago to the west side of the city. Plans were soon underway to expand the Lake Line to serve suburban areas west of Chicago.

[18] Facility and ADA Planning Manager Memo to D. Moy, May 10, 1995, CTA Facility Planning Station and Bus Files.
[19] M.E. Lamont, Memorandum to Distribution, May 17, 1995, CTA Facility Planning Station and Bus Files.
[20] Fare Equipment and Operational Graphics Memo to James Jenkins, November 2, 1999, CTA Facility Planning Station and Bus Files.
[21] Lake Line Austin, Photos of Canopy dated December 3, 2007, CTA Archives.

The LSER faced new challenges in efforts to extend the Lake Line "L" into Austin and Oak Park, which were then part of Cicero Township. By 1899, it was clear that rather than providing an expansion of the elevated structure itself, the extension would descend to ground level just west of Laramie Avenue. From there, trains with overhead electrification would travel on surface tracks westerly to the border of Oak Park at Harlem Avenue. This grade-level extension to the Lake Line "L" was completed in 1901.

In the early 1900s, the LSER reorganized and adopted a new name-- the Chicago & Oak Park (C & OP) Elevated Railway. The C & OP owned and managed the Lake Line "L" for many years, even after the firm went into receivership in 1911. Despite many terrible accidents each year, the surface-level extension continued to operate for decades. Finally, in the 1940s, the Lake Line extension came under public ownership when the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) formed and acquired existing elevated and surface lines throughout the metropolitan area. A decade later, CTA made plans to remove the Lake Line's grade-level tracks and elevate the extension by building on an existing Chicago and North Western (C & NW) Railroad Company embankment.

By the late 1950s, plans for what was then known as the Lake Street "L" extension called for five new stations, with stationhouses that had entryways at the ground level and stairs/escalators leading to sheltered platforms on the top of the embankment. CTA contracted with architects Dittrich & Gibson to design efficient and modern stations for each of the five new stops. These included Austin Station, which had primary and secondary stationhouses that were built into the C & NW embankment.

Chicago's Earliest Mechanically Powered Transit Rail Lines

As Chicago experienced unprecedented growth during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, local residents sought better transportation options for traveling within the city and to adjacent suburbs. Since the 1850s, many Chicagoans relied on omnibuses pulled by horses "along rails laid on the streets."[22] As freight and passenger railroad systems were being developed across the country, many citizens hoped that a mechanical train system would soon replace horse-drawn cars for travel within Chicago. Although small steam locomotives called "dummies," soon provided an alternative, riders disliked the smoke, sparks, and noise created by these trains.[23] For the most part, Chicagoans continued to ride the horsecars, despite various drawbacks associated with this form of travel, such as the unpleasant smells caused by the vast amounts of manure and urine produced by the working animals.

[22] David M. Young, "Street Railways," *Encyclopedia of Chicago,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1207.html
[23] David M. Young, "Street Railways," *Encyclopedia of Chicago.*

Chicagoans took note when the nation's first experimental elevated railway line was built in New York City in 1867. This single track "air-line," which "operated by cables," ran from Battery Place through Greenwich Street.[24] Although the railway was soon shut down due to breakdowns and other problems, a new company purchased and improved the fledgling elevated line in the early 1870s. By 1877, the Greenwich Street elevated was serving over three million passengers annually.[25] Chicago inventors soon promoted various schemes for elevated railway systems, and local companies formed to pursue some of these ideas. As these projects required substantial financing and political support, many never got off the ground.

In the early 1880s, the cable car—a mechanically powered alternative to horsecars—became part of the local landscape. Inspired by "San Francisco, which introduced the cable car during the prior decade, Chicago got its first cable car service," known as the Chicago City Railway line, in January of 1882.[26] A major improvement to the steam dummies, the new cable car system relied on "large steam engines" that "pulled miles of cable through channels dug into the streets."[27] Cable cars caught on quickly. In fact, the city soon boasted one of the world's largest cable car networks.[28]

Despite the tremendous popularity of cable cars, Chicago inventors, engineers, and businessmen remained eager to develop other "schemes and dreams for public conveyances."[29] While some firms worked on creating an electric streetcar system, others focused on developing elevated railway systems to address the "shortage of street space and continuing demand for more service" throughout the area.[30] The first two firms that successfully established elevated railway lines in Chicago—the South Side Rapid Transit (SSRT) Railroad Company and the Lake Street Elevated Railway Company were incorporated in 1888.

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[24] Henry E. Armstrong, "Early Transportation in New York," *The Railroad Gazette, Volume 37.* 1904, 339.
[25] "The Elevated Railway and Civic Beauty," *The World To-day, Vol. VII,* (Chicago: The World To-Day Company, 1907) 166.
[26] Federal Transit Administration and U.S. Department of Transportation, *Historic Context Report for Transit Rail System Development: Nationwide with Localized Contexts for the Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. Metropolitan Areas*, June, 2017, 44. https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/regulations-and-guidance/environmental-programs/63526/ftahistoriccontextreport508compliant.pdf.
[27] David M. Young, "Street Railways," *Encyclopedia of Chicago.*
[28] Greg Borzo, "Cable Car Remnants," Forgotten Chicago, last modified December 28, 2012. http://forgottenchicago.com/features/cable-car-remnants/.
[29] Greg Borzo, *The Chicago "L,"* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007) 13.
[30] Bruce G. Moffat, *The "L": The Development of Chicago's Rapid Transit System, 1888-1932* (Chicago: Central Electric Railfans' Association, 1995) 9.

The SSRT erected an elevated structure between Congress Street and 39th Street and began providing service in May of 1892. Nicknamed the "Alley L" because the elevated tracking structure stretched over city-owned alleys, the line was soon extended further to the south.[31] By the end of 1892, the SSRT's line stretched south to 63rd Street and thus provided rapid transit service from downtown to Jackson Park just prior to the opening of the World's Columbian Exposition.

The Lake Street Elevated Railway Company formed to build and operate an "L" line that would commence "at the east end of Lake Street in the City of Chicago" and run "westward along Lake Street to the Village of Oak Park."[32] Although girders for the Lake Street "L" began to rise in 1889, various obstacles delayed the completion of the line for several years. Thus, Lake Street Elevated became the second "L" line to begin operating in Chicago.

Early History of Lake Street Elevated Railway Company

The Lake Street Elevated Railway Company had turbulent beginnings. When first chartered on February 7, 1888, the firm's chief sponsor was Michael Cassius McDonald, a politically powerful crime boss nicknamed "King Mike."[33] McDonald's involvement in transit was not motivated by a desire to provide an important public amenity to the growing urban area. Rather, he became the company's major investor to "skim profits, manipulate stock, and shake down potential competitors," and thus, line his own pockets.[34]

The company soon faced another major obstacle. The incorporators had made a commitment to base the construction of their "L" line on an experimental structural design called the Meigs system. Morris H. Alberger, President of the Lake Street Elevated Railway Company also served as president of the Meigs Elevated Railway Company, and he had pushed for the adoption of this technology.[35] Named for its inventor, Joe V. Meigs, the "steam-powered monorail system" utilized a "single longitudinal truss support" to guide "a cylindrically-shaped train."[36] Although a short track had been set up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to demonstrate the Meigs system, none of the functioning elevated lines throughout the nation utilized this technology. Despite the lack of

[31] Graham Garfield, "The Original "L" Companies," www.Chicago"L".org, accessed August 11, 2022, https://www.chicago-l.org/history/4line.html#South.
[32] Bruce G. Moffat, 55.
[33] Graham Garfield, "Green Line: Lake Branch-History," www.Chicago "L".org, accessed August 12, 2023, https://www.chicago-l.org/operations/lines/lake.html.
[34] Greg Borzo, *The Chicago "L,"* 35.
[35] "West Side "L" Schemes," *Chicago Tribune*, December 12, 1888, 3.
[36] Bruce G. Moffat, 56.

evidence that the Meigs system would work, the Lake Street Elevated Railway Company's original franchise required the use of this technology.[37]

Chicago's mayor, John A. Roche, was skeptical about the Meigs system. After visiting the track in Massachusetts, he reported that "significant changes to the design of the structure would be necessary to ensure adequate safety for passengers and provide sufficient vertical clearance for vehicles passing beneath."[38] As a result, in November of 1890, the City Council removed the requirement that the Meigs system had to be used for the construction of the Lake Street "L." This legislation also allowed the elevated structure "to be extended into the downtown district" on the east and to 52nd Street (Laramie Avenue) on the west.[39]

In 1892, the Lake Street Elevated Railway Company was reorganized as the Lake Street Railroad Company (LSER) under the leadership of Roche (who had completed his term as mayor). Construction was finally completed, and on November 6, 1893, the Lake Street line "opened for operation from Market and Madison streets west to California Avenue."[40] Under the headline of "Joy for West Siders," Chicago's *Inter-Ocean* reported that along with Roche and other officers and directors of the elevated railroad company, 1200 invited guests inspected the line and took an inaugural ride on it.[41]

Lake Line Extension Plans

By early 1894, the LSER Lake Line "L" reached 48th Street (N. Cicero Avenue), which was then the western boundary of Chicago. Plans were underway to continue with an extension that would provide service to Austin and Oak Park, which were both suburban communities within Cicero Township. The LSER's goal was to extend the Lake Line to 72nd Street (Harlem Avenue) at the western edge of Oak Park. Although construction work west of 48th Street was briefly stalled by "…a suit brought by a group of property owners who feared that the elevated structure would "…'damage' their property values," the "…court ruled in favor of the company."[42] Service to the unfinished 52nd Street (Laramie Avenue) station was initiated at the end of April 1894.

Many residents of Cicero Township wanted the Lake Line extension to be completed without delay; however, representatives of the elevated company were unhappy with the terms that the Town Board had included in various drafts of a proposed franchise

[37] "Lake Street "L" Ordinance," *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1888, 8.
[38] Bruce G. Moffat, 57.
[39] Bruce G. Moffat, 58.
[40] Bessie Louis Pierce, *A History of Chicago, The Rise of a Modern City 1871-1893, Volume Three* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 220.
[41] "Joy for West Siders—Lake Street Elevated Railroad Formally Opened," *The Inter-Ocean,* November 5, 1893, 6.
[42] Bruce G. Moffat, 63.

agreement. Despite many lively community meetings in Austin and Oak Park, an agreement had yet to be reached to extend the "L" line into the suburbs.

By this time, Charles T. Yerkes, "a traction baron with a questionable reputation," had acquired a controlling interest in the LSER.[43] Yerkes was building a street and elevated railway empire. He owned several Chicago streetcar companies as well as the Metropolitan West Side Elevated Company— the LSER's major competitor. He was also the principal investor in the Northwestern Elevated Company, a firm with plans to build a north side "L," although construction had not yet begun.

Yerkes had provided the cash-strapped LSER with an infusion of capital. As the company was having difficulty paying interest due on its bonds, he also renegotiated with bondholders. Those who were willing accepted debentures backed by the Northwestern Elevated Company bonds in place of the interest payment that was due. The Yerkes-headed LSER was then able to focus on the Lake Line's extension east to Wabash Avenue. With stops at Fifth Avenue (Wells Street), Clark Street, State Street, and Wabash Avenue, this extension brought most of the "…downtown area within a short walk of a station."[44] The Lake Line also made another major achievement in 1896 when it converted its steam-powered locomotives to an electrified system.

Although residents of Austin and Oak Park wanted to see progress with the Lake Line extension into their communities, Yerkes was in no rush to complete this project. In fact, he suggested deferring construction of the Lake Line's western extension for eleven years.[45] He was anxious, however, to receive approval from Cicero Township for a 50-year franchise for his Cicero & Proviso streetcar line. To compel Yerkes to move forward with the Lake Line extension, the Cicero Town Board put language in their Cicero & Proviso streetcar franchise agreement to make that project contingent upon the expansion of the Lake Line "L" to 72nd Street (Harlem Avenue).

Cicero Township and Yerkes reached an agreement in December of 1898. "The franchise allowed for the construction of several lines and branches" including the Lake Line extension, which would stretch "straight west along South Boulevard" to the western edge of Oak Park.[46] The project would not provide an expansion of the elevated structure itself. Rather, the railway line would descend to ground level just west of Laramie Avenue. From this point westerly, service would be provided by trolleys with overhead electrification.[47]

[43] Graham Garfield, "Green Line- Lake Branch History."
[44] Bruce G. Moffat, 69.
[45] Bruce G. Moffat, 84.
[46] Graham Garfield, "Green Line- Lake Branch History."
[47] Graham Garfield, "Green Line- Lake Branch History."

Lake Line Extension Progresses Despite Tensions within Cicero Township

During negotiations between the Cicero Town Board and the LSER, Oak Park residents had rallied for a provision in the franchise agreement to keep their fare costs at five cents per ticket to and from downtown. Despite these efforts, the final agreement did not include this language. Instead, it specified that the rides between downtown and Austin would be five cents, but tickets to any of the stations west of Austin Avenue would be eight cents. Oak Parkers were furious. The town board had long been controlled by Austinites who were known to "skim the cream off the local government."[48] This animosity continued to grow and in April of 1899, Oak Parkers and other Cicero Township residents ousted Austin out of the township by voting to annex it into Chicago. Although Oak Park remained part of Cicero Township at that time, many residents wanted their community to secede.

Construction of the Lake Line extension into Austin and Oak Park was finally underway in early 1899. Realizing that the street-level tracks would be a safety hazard, Cicero Township ordered the LSER to post flagmen at all street crossings. The railroad company's leaders balked and shut the whole project down for approximately two weeks in the fall of 1899.[49] Even after the standstill, construction progressed at a slow pace. By the following summer, tracks had been installed in South Boulevard, paralleling the C &NW RR tracks only as far west as Lombard Avenue. The elevated company requested the removal of "all telegraph and telephone poles in South boulevard [sic.] to allow the laying of the tracks" west of Lombard Avenue to Harlem Avenue.[50]

By the following fall, the elevated company was coming close to reaching its deadline for completing the extension. The "…town board met to review the project's progress," and requested the track grade be lowered so that the township "…could proceed with some street improvements."[51] The LSER initially refused because some tracks had already been laid. Cicero Township officials responded by halting any further work. The firm soon capitulated and agreed to lower the tracks. The township trustees then pushed the final deadline for the completion of the extension back to February 1, 1901. About a week prior to the new deadline, the *Chicago Tribune* announced the opening of "the new branch of the Lake Street 'L' road, west from Lombard avenue [sic.] to Harlem avenue, a distance of a mile and a half."[52]

The movement for Oak Park to become a separate municipality had been gaining momentum for several years. In November of 1901, residents of Cicero Township cast

[48] May Vote Austin In," *Chicago Tribune,* October 30, 1898, 33.
[49] Bruce Moffatt, 95.
[50] "To Extend Lake Street 'L'," *Chicago Tribune,* July 14, 1900, 9.
[51] Bruce Moffatt, 97.
[52] "Trains Run on New Branch," *Chicago Tribune,* January 27, 1901, 8.

ballots in a special election to decide the issue. With one of the largest turnouts "...in a local election for some time," voters decided that Oak Park would split from the township and become incorporated as a village.[53] (Berwyn was also separated from Cicero Township in this election.)

By this time, Yerkes no longer headed the LSER. With his business dealings under increasing scrutiny, he left Chicago for New York in 1899 and then moved to London the following year. In 1901, Yerkes sold his interest in the LSER to a syndicate headed by the investment firm of Blair & Co.[54] The LSER underwent another reorganization in 1904, adopting a new name, the Chicago & Oak Park (C & OP) Elevated Railway Company.[55]

Hazardous Conditions Along the Extension

The Laramie to Harlem Avenue corridor became increasingly dangerous in the early twentieth century as greater numbers of automobiles began using South Boulevard. After receiving pressure from the City of Chicago, the C & NW Railroad Company agreed to build a concrete embankment and elevate its tracks in 1907. "Although concerns for public safety and operating-efficiency rather than aesthetics or symbolism, determined the track elevation, the project gave the railroad visual dominance in Oak Park which symbolized its central role in the area's development as a commuting suburb of Chicago."[56]

Work on "excavating for the foundations of the retaining walls" to support the C & NW track embankment began just west of Austin Avenue in September of 1907.[57] Due to the complexity and substantial length of the structure, it took several years to complete the project.[58]

In a sense, the C & NW railroad embankment made the C & OP right-of-way even more dangerous for motorists and pedestrians. There were twenty-two grade crossings between Laramie and Harlem avenues, and at many of them, southbound motorists would pass under a C & NW viaduct, come directly onto the C & OP tracks, and then onto east-west traffic on Lake Avenue (now W. Corcoran Place) in Chicago and South Boulevard in Oak Park. Commuters coming from the north or south had to cross one set of tracks to access the "L"'s center platform, and pedestrians who wanted to pass through the intersection had to walk over two sets of tracks at the grade crossings.

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[53] "Division Wins in Cicero," *Chicago Tribune,* November 6, 1901, 7.
[54] "Investors' Manual," *The Economist,* Volume XXVII, May, 1902, 39.
[55] Graham Garfield, "Historic Figures-Samuel Insull (1859-1938)," www.Chicago "L".org, accessed August 12, 2022, https://www.chicago-l.org/figures/insull/.
[56] Daniel M. Bluestone, *Ridgeland Oak Park Historic District,* Section 7, 7.
[57] *Oak Leaves*, September 9, 1907, 26.
[58] *Railway and Gazette,* Vol. 53, September 27, 1912, 599

As serious accidents continued to occur, Chicago and Oak Park leaders discussed the need for legislation that would force the C & OP Elevated Railway Company to elevate the tracks west of Laramie Avenue. During a public meeting in the fall of 1909, George Plummer, a representative of the Oak Park Austin Transportation Club, publicly chastised Clarence Knight, President of the C & OP, for allowing the treacherous conditions along its right-of-way to continue. Plummer said:

> "Look at our beautiful South boulevard. Better call it Dead Man's lane or Bloody gulch. You don't smile when your relatives are killed at some grade crossing when some sleepy watchman failed to see the train coming. It's cheaper for Knight to hire lawyers than to afford protection to prevent the mutilation of women and children."[59]

Although the City of Chicago and the Village of Oak Park passed ordinances to compel the C & OP to elevate its tracks in 1911, the railway company ignored these directives. Having had financial problems for many years, the C & OP went into receivership. The receiver "was none other than Samuel Insull and the Blair-controlled Northwestern Elevated" company, a firm that "owned 52% percent of the C & OP's holding company."[60]

Rather than forming a new company, Insull and his cohorts created a consolidated voluntary association called the Chicago Elevated Railways Voluntary Trust (CER). The city's four major elevated companies—C & OP, the Northwestern Elevated, the South Side Elevated Railroad, and the Metropolitan West Side Elevated Railway company were all part of the CER, an entity which functioned "for all practical purposes as a holding company; yielding the benefits of centralized control without dissolving the underlying companies or disturbing their outstanding stock or bond issues."[61] Samuel Insull was elected as chairman of the CER. He selected Britton I. Budd, head of the Metropolitan West Side "L," to serve as president of the CER.

The Lake Line's surface level extension remained in operation despite the numerous serious and even fatal accidents that took place along this stretch each year. In 1913, a grand jury held the owners and officials of the C & OP Railway Company responsible for the death of William H. Warner, a flagman who worked on the line. This was one of three fatal accidents that occurred over the course of only a few days. Describing the extension as an "abomination," the coroner stated, "The crossings, the view of which is blocked on one side by the Chicago and Northwestern tracks, are death traps. The whole system

[59] "Smokers Hot; Bombard "L" Road," *Chicago Tribune,* November 9, 1909, 1.
[60] Graham Garfield, "Chicago Elevated Railways Management, 1911," www.Chicago "L".org, accessed August 12, 2022, https://www.chicago-l.org/personnel/figures/1911.html.
[61] Bruce Moffat, 237.

should be elevated."[62] Following this series of accidents, the railway company installed guard gates on both sides of the tracks at each street crossing instead of just one side, which had been the previous condition. Oak Park officials feared that the space was too narrow for traffic and that the extra set of gates would cause additional safety problems.[63]

In 1914, the Illinois Public Utilities Commission investigated and held hearings about the C & OP's grade level tracks. The commission found that over a five-year period in which police officials had been collecting data related to incidents on the C & OP tracks, forty accidents had occurred within the limits of Oak Park, ten of which had resulted in fatalities. The commission reported that the various devices that the C & OP had installed to improve public safety at grade crossings were "…ineffective and insufficient, and that said elevated railway west from Laramie Avenue to Harlem Avenue should be elevated in the interest of public safety."[64] The Commission ordered that as receiver of the C & OP Railway Company, Samuel Insull must immediately move forward with a track elevation project. In fact, the order specified that construction should begin no later than July 1, 1914.[65]

Because the C & OP's receivership was under the federal government's purview, Insull brought the matter to the attention of the federal courts. Judge Christian Kohlsaat, who had recently ordered the foreclosure sale of the railroad, nullified the state commission's directive and ordered that the C & OP should submit a petition "…for permission to issue receiver's certificates to raise money for elevating the company's tracks near the western terminus."[66] Due to ongoing financial problems, a track elevation project would not materialize for decades.

Creation of the Chicago Transit Authority

By the early 1940s, major efforts were underway to consolidate the various privately owned transit lines that operated in Chicago and its metropolitan area into a unified and government-owned system. Due to "overregulation by the city, corruption, and poor financial practices," these surface and elevated railway companies were "hopelessly mired in bankruptcy."[67] The street railways, which operated under the auspices of the Chicago Surface Lines (CSL), were, in fact, made up of five private companies: the Chicago

[62] "'L" Owners Held for Man's Death," *Chicago Tribune,* December 12, 1913, 1.
[63] *Poor Richards Manual of Public Utilities*, Vol. 6, 1918, 825; and "More Woes for Oak Park 'L'," *Chicago Tribune,* December 26, 1913, 11.
[64] *First Annual Report of the State Public Utilities Commission of the State of Illinois for the Year Ending November 30, 1914,* Volume 1, 1915, 188-90
[65] "Orders Oak Park to Raise Tracks," *Chicago Tribune,* May 1, 1914, 20.
[66] "Chicago and Oak Park 'L'," *Minneapolis Star,* October 9, 1914, 21
[67] David M. Young, "Chicago Transit Authority," *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago; Chicago Historical Society, 2005), accessed August 22, 2023, http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/274.html.

Railways Company, Chicago City Railway Company, Calumet and South Chicago Railway Company, Chicago and Western Railway Company, and the Southern Street Railway Company. (The CSL also owned hundreds of buses by this time.) "Due to persistent financial distress," all five entities were "being managed by trustees or receivers appointed by the District Court of the United States."[68] Consolidation efforts sought to unify all the CSL companies with the firms that ran the CRT elevated lines as well as a few miles of additional elevated tracking that still fell under the jurisdiction of the Union Consolidated Elevated Railway Company.[69]

Government leaders had been discussing the need for transit merger legislation for years by the time Illinois Governor Dwight H. Green and Chicago Mayor Edward J. Kelly began working together on the issue in early 1945.[70] That April, the Illinois state legislature approved an act that would establish the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and grant it the "power to acquire, maintain and operate a transportation system in the metropolitan area of Cook County, Ill."[71] The Chicago City Council followed up with an ordinance authorizing the creation of the CTA. The act and ordinance were ratified with a six-to-one majority by public referendum on June 4, 1945.[72]

Before the newly formed CTA could begin operations, it needed to purchase the existing surface and elevated railway systems. This was somewhat problematic because neither legislative act had provided an "initial grant, tax allocation or taxing power for the acquisition of assets," nor "for their modernization or extension."[73] Instead, CTA was given the authority to generate revenue through the sale of bonds. After securing a trust agreement and selling $105 million of revenue bonds, CTA acquired CSL and CRT, and on October 1, 1947, it began operating all of the city's surface and elevated trains and many of its motor buses. (At that time, the Chicago Motor Coach Company operated many of the city's buses. Several years later, that company would also be acquired by CTA.)

Lake Street Elevation Project

In the early 1950s, CTA began planning a modernization project for what was then known as the Lake Street "L." The proposal called for replacing the two-and-a-half-mile surface line stretch between Laramie Street to Harlem Avenue with a new elevated extension by utilizing "…part of the paralleling grade separated right-of-way of the Chicago & North

[68] George Krambles and Art Peterson, *CTA at 45*, (Oak Park, IL: George Krambles Transit Scholarship Fund, 1993) 7.
[69] Graham Garfield, "The CTA is Created: A New Era Begins (1947)," www.Chicago "L".org, accessed September 6, 2022, https://www.chicago-l.org/history/CTA1.html.
[70] "Kelly is Eager to Meet Green on Transit Plan," *Chicago Tribune*, January 4, 1945, 13.
[71] *Securities and Exchange Commission Decisions and Reports, Volume 20 July 18, 1945 to October 12, 1945*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1952) 254.
[72] Graham Garfield, "The CTA is Created."
[73] Krambles and Peterson, *CTA at 45*, 7.

Western railroad."[74] This initiative would eliminate the twenty-two grade crossings that had caused terrible accidents and frequent traffic bottlenecks over the years. By 1954, officials of the C & NW and CTA had "agreed in principle" to the Lake Street Elevation Project in which the railroad company would turn over "…the two tracks on the south side of the right-of-way to the CTA on a lease basis."[75] Mayor Richard J. Daley was in full support of this proposal. In fact, he described the $4 million project when he spoke before West Side and Oak Park civic leaders at a luncheon meeting of the West Side Real Estate Board on May 14, 1956.[76]

The problems with the existing conditions along the Laramie Street and Harlem Avenue corridor were explained in the *CTA Transit News*. Noting that an estimated 200,000 motorists and pedestrians traveled along this stretch of surface line each weekday, the article described the treacherous impact of the grade crossings on traffic flow, especially during rush hour:

> "More than 500 rapid transit trains operate through these grade crossings each weekday. In the peak hour, there are 48 trains, half in-bound and half out-bound, and the gates at some crossings may be down, blocking both street and pedestrian traffic, for a total of 25 minutes in this peak hour."[77]

In February of 1958, the CTA board authorized its chairman, Virgil E. Gunlock, to enter into three agreements that would allow the Lake Street Elevation Project to move forward.[78] Two of the agreements dealt with construction issues and the coordinated financing of the project, while the third provided "a lease agreement permitting CTA to use a two-track section of the Chicago and North Western's elevated right-of-way for an annual rental payment of $168,800."[79]

The project had five sponsoring agencies: CTA, the City of Chicago, the Village of Oak Park, Cook County, and the State of Illinois. In addition to funds committed by the five sponsors, by early 1960, the Federal Bureau of Public Roads had agreed to provide a grant for the project. *Chicago Tribune* reporter Thomas Buck explained that the federal contribution would support widening the viaduct over Harlem Avenue "because of the

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[74] *New Horizons of the Chicago Metropolitan Area,* Chicago Transit Authority, 1958, 24.
[75] Thomas Buck, "Plan Lake St. 'L' Elevation Thru Oak Park: Study Use of Rail Right of Way," *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1954, 17.
[76] "Plan to Shift Lake St. 'L' to N.W. Line Told: Mayor Says Cost Would be 4 Millions," *Chicago Tribune,* May 15, 1956, 5.
[77] "Lake Line Project to Start this Spring," *CTA Transit News*, Vol. XII, No. 3, March, 1959, 4.
[78] "Approve Agreements for Lake Street Elevation," CTA *Transit News*, Vol. XI, No. 3, March, 1958, 3.
[79] "Approve Agreements for Lake Street Elevation," CTA *Transit News*, 3.

fact that Harlem is a federal aid thoroughfare."[80] At this same time, demolition began on four C & NW stations along the elevated viaduct which would no longer be needed. The "…removal of the C & N. W. RR. Stations on the railroad right-of-way" provided the "first visible evidence of the start of construction on the $4,000,000 project."[81]

New Lake Street Stations Would Reflect a Modern Trend

Chicago had suffered from urban decay and decline during the long decades of the Depression and WWII. The construction of the highway system promoted growth of the suburbs and movement away from the city. While many Chicagoans "were gloomy about the future of the city," Mayor Richard J. Daley had an extremely optimistic vision for Chicago.[82] He undertook ambitious and aggressive rebuilding programs to reshape and modernize the city. Miles L. Berger, author of *They Built Chicago* notes that Mayor Daley's "enthusiasm for huge projects and access to a rich vein of federal funds fueled the rapid redevelopment of the city in the 1950s and '60s."[83]

During this period, developments in major American cities, particularly Chicago, were influenced by Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), the famous modern architect and previous director of the Bauhaus in Germany. By then, Mies had been living in Chicago and working as director of the architecture department at the Armour Institute (IIT) for two decades. As the designer of significant buildings such as the Promontory Apartments, 860-880 N. Lake Shore Drive, and the Federal Center (then under construction) in Chicago, Detroit's Lafayette Park, and the Seagram Building in New York, Mies spurred the proliferation of modernism throughout the nation. He also trained many of America's most talented young architects. Mies and his students embraced new materials and building technologies—especially glass and metal curtain wall construction—and they produced flat-roofed buildings with little to no ornamentation, emphasizing simple geometric forms and clean lines.

Though much more modest in scale and appearance than buildings produced by Mies and his disciples, the five new Lake Street Extension stations were inspired by the modern trend that they had sparked. CTA retained the services of architects Dittrich & Gibson for the new stations. A CTA pamphlet about the project notes that the use of shared right-of-way by both rapid transit and private railway lines was an entirely innovative concept. The publication explains that the "influence of this modern trend"

[80] Thomas Buck, "Begin Relocating Lake Street Track: Project Will Cut 22 Crossings," *Chicago Tribune*, January 13, 1960, 11.
[81] "Begin Work on Lake Elevation Project," CTA *Transit News*, Vol. XIII, No. 2, February 1960, 3.
[82] Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1969, 375.
[83] Miles L. Berger, *They Built Chicago: Entrepreneurs Who Shaped a Great City's Architecture* (Chicago: Bonus Books) 1992, 200.

was "further emphasized in the construction features of the five new stations" along "the relocated section of the route."[84]

From east to west, the five new stations were to be located between Central and Parkside Avenues, Austin Boulevard and Mason Avenue in Chicago (also known as Austin-Mason and Lake Line Austin Station); and Cuyler and Ridgeland Avenues, Oak Park and Euclid Avenues, and Harlem Avenue and Marion Street in Oak Park. Plans called for integrating all the proposed stations into the south wall of the C & NW RR embankment.

The new stationhouses were sited slightly above street grade. The design of four of them—the Central-Parkside, Austin-Harlem, Oak Park-Euclid, and Harlem-Marion stations—featured double entrance structures with a larger mass on the west side of the elevated stop and a smaller one at the east. The fifth, the Ridgeland Avenue Station, was comprised of only a single building. Each of the new stationhouses was one story tall with flat roofs with prominent overhangs, aluminum framed glass curtain walls, and sleek aluminum handrails.

While the stationhouses were all quite similar in design, the architects used color to create a separate identity for each. Subtly different shades of a single color (or complimentary colors) were incorporated into the interior and exterior designs of each station. Utilizing glazed brick, porcelain enamel panels, and ceramic tiles, the stations featured the following color scheme: Austin-Mason (Austin Lake Line), gray; Central-Parkside, yellow (one of the stationhouses was later replaced and the other is now boarded up); Ridgeland, blue; Oak Park-Euclid, brown (with peach interior); and Marion-Harlem, green.

Dittrich & Gibson also included other features that were then considered quite modern. For example, the primary structures of the Austin-Mason, Central-Parkside, and Oak Park-Marion stations had reversible dual-operation escalators. The CTA pamphlet explains that during rush hour, the escalators would "operate in the direction of the prevailing traffic flow," while "in off-peak hours," they would "operate automatically."[85]

Among other station features touted by the CTA at the time of construction were the canopied single island platform and state-of-the-art passenger control facilities. These included "agent-controlled illuminated fare-indicator turnstiles, coin-operated turnstiles, and electrically operated, remotely-controlled exit turnstiles."[86] CTA estimated that the project would speed operations on the Lake Street Line by sixteen percent.[87]

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[84] *Elevation of Lake Street Rapid Transit: a triumph for public agency cooperation; eliminates traffic hazards and delays of surface operation in Chicago-Oak Park*. (Chicago: Chicago Transit Authority, October 27, 1962).
[85] *Elevation of Lake Street Rapid Transit*, CTA, 1962.
[86] *Elevation of Lake Street Rapid Transit*, CTA, 1962.
[87] Thomas Buck, "CTA Promised 'L' Relocation by November," *Chicago Tribune*, June 29, 1962, 55.

Completion of the Lake Street Elevation Project

In 1961, as the project architects and engineers completed plans and documents for the Lake Street Elevation Project (also known as the Lake Street Track Elevation Project), a temporary trestle was built to allow trains to operate during construction. "The trestle, extending between Laramie and Lockwood Avenues, was erected over almost half of Lake Street" (South Boulevard in Oak Park) "over almost half of the present elevated structure."[88]

M.A. Lombard & Son of Alsip, Illinois, the contractor that had erected the temporary trestle, submitted the winning bid of $1,358,358 for the construction of the five new stations. The Contracting and Material Company of Evanston was awarded a $358,813 contract for the installation of the power distribution facilities.[89]

Construction began in late spring of 1962, and in June, CTA announced that the project would be completed sometime before the first of November.[90] A large yard was created west of Harlem Avenue to provide a storage area for construction materials and equipment. As an initial step, the contractors built the connecting link between the existing elevated structure at Laramie Avenue and the C & NW embankment. The remainder of the work was undertaken in two major phases. The first phase involved the construction of the island platforms, portions of the stations built within the embankment, "…installation of new westbound track at the upper level," and "temporary stair connections between the new westbound track and the existing eastbound platforms at street-grade."[91] When this work was finished, westbound trains began running on the new track.

The second phase of the project involved cutting through the railroad embankment's south wall, construction of the stationhouses (including the portions built outside of the embankment), and installing the new eastbound track. The "abandoned Chicago and Northwestern's Oak Park station and abandoned stairways" were then demolished.[92] Since street-level trains continued to operate through the construction period, CTA could not raze all of the surface tracks, platforms, stations, overhead cables, and temporary stairways until the very end of the project.

Several dedication events were held in the fall of 1962, to celebrate the completion of the project. Festivities included a ceremony in which Mayor Daley and CTA Chairman Virgil Gunlock used a "saw and hatchet to simulate [the] dismantling of crossing gates" of

[88] "Lake Track Elevation Project Gets Underway," CTA *Transit News*, Vol. XIV, No. 8, August, 1961, 2.
[89] "Contract Awards Speed Elevation Project," CTA *Transit News*, Vol. XV, No. 5, May, 1962, 1.
[90] Thomas Buck, "CTA Promised 'L' Relocation," *CTA Transit News*, 1962, 55.
[91] "Contract Awards Speed Elevation Project," *CTA Transit News*, Vol. XV, No. 5, May, 1962, 3.
[92] "Contract Awards Speed Elevation Project," *CTA Transit News*, 1962, 3.

the old twenty-two surface line grade crossings."[93] Engineers, officials, and others who worked on the project participated in a ceremonial ride along the 'L" extension prior to its official opening. Separate ribbon-cutting events were held at the Chicago and Oak Park ends of the extension to give Mayor Daley and Oak Park's Village President Homer S. Brown each the opportunity to preside over ceremonies. Regular service on the extension began on October 28, 1962.

Part II. Structural/Design/Equipment Information

A. General Description:

1. Character:
The Lake Line Austin Station was built as part of an ambitious post-WWII project to replace a dangerous stretch of surface railway with an extension to an existing elevated line on railway right-of-way shared with C & NW Railroad Company. The Lake Street Elevation Project included five new elevated stations with Mid-century Modern style stationhouses that were built into the south side of a historic concrete railroad embankment along W. Corcoran Place (South Boulevard).

2. Conditions of fabric:
The Austin Station's primary and secondary stationhouses are in fair condition. In some instances, areas of glazed brick have delaminated due to freeze-thaw conditions. Some interior tiles have failed, particularly in the secondary stationhouse. The concrete embankment shows some evidence of cracking and spalling at the expansion joints. The existing stationhouses and platform do not meet the accessibility goals of CTA's ASAP Strategic Plan and are also not code compliant. The Lake Line Austin Station Project will make the stationhouses and platform fully accessible and code compliant.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Dimensions and Materials:

a. Austin (Primary) Stationhouse
While most of the 25'x 50' stationhouse is within the railroad embankment (see interior description), the south end of the structure projects 10' out from the south side of the concrete retaining walls. The station sits upon a concrete base 2 ½' above grade and is accessed by a 10' wide stair and landing on the west with modern aluminum safety railings. The stationhouse utilizes a 10" square steel reinforced concrete frame, which contains areas of grey-glazed Darlington brick and aluminum and glass curtain walls. The curtain walls

[93] "Oak Park Gay; 'L' is Elevated After 56 Yrs.," *Chicago Tribune*, October 28, 1962.

consist of 3’ wide panels divided by aluminum mullions and rails. (The lower sashes originally featured enameled porcelain panels, which were later replaced with clear safety glass.) The south elevation has a curtain wall on the west end and glazed brick on the east, while the east elevation is clad with glazed brick. The concrete frame supports a flat concrete roof with a chamfered edge. The overhanging roof projects 3’ on the east and south and 10’ on the west to provide protection to the entrance below. The total height of the station from the foundation to the top of the roof is 12’-3”.

b. Secondary (Mason Avenue) Stationhouse

The secondary (Mason) stationhouse has an 18’-8’ x 10’ exterior footprint. Though smaller, this structure echoes the design and construction of the primary stationhouse. Utilizing a steel reinforced concrete frame, the secondary stationhouse is topped by a flat concrete roof with a chamfered edge, which cantilevers 3’ on the east and south and 10’ on the west (above the entrance). Other dimensions and features of the design match those of the primary stationhouse. These include a 2’-6” high concrete base and a 9’ floor-to-ceiling height for a total height of 12’-3”. Although the original concrete stoop and curved aluminum handrail remain, the curtain wall has been removed and replaced by a red brick façade with a solid metal security door. Red brick has also replaced the south elevation’s original curtain wall

c. Platform, Canopy, and Stairwell/Escalator Enclosures

Located in the center of the upper level, the wooden platform is 420’ long and has tracks running on both sides. The structure tapers from 19’ at its center to 15’-6” on the east and west ends. A 336’ long canopy consists of eleven T-shaped steel columns (12’ in height) supporting a curved corrugated metal roof. Steel safety gates (also known as “foolsgates”) stand at the east and west ends of the platform.

There are two steel and glass curtain wall stairwell enclosures on the Austin-Mason Station platform. As these have no roofs, they are only partially enclosed and thus primarily act as windbreaks. The larger enclosure (near the center of the platform), which shelters the combination stair and escalator, is approximately 32’4” long and 8’ 4” wide. A small electrical room (approximately 8’ x 6’-4”) is attached to the west end of the stairwell enclosure and constructed of dark gray glazed structural tile in a running bond pattern. Further to the west, the smaller (approximately 16’ x 5’) enclosure protects a single stair. (Originally, this stair utilized balusters and handrails only, but a curtain wall system was constructed in the 1990s.) Both systems

incorporate protective perforated metal screens to discourage vandalism and graffiti.

d. Austin Viaduct

A steel riveted viaduct supports the tracks and platform that bridge over N. Austin Boulevard. This bridge is comprised of three rows of steel bents (columns)—a center row and two rows that align with the curb. Steel pipe railings installed on the high curbs provide additional separation from traffic. Riveted girders, which connect the steel bents and box-like spandrels, provide substantial support. The Austin Bridge was reinforced and modified to accommodate concrete footers and connections that support the Lake Line project's new elevated tracks and platform.

2. Foundation/Structure:

Constructed of steel-reinforced concrete, the railroad embankment walls rise to a height of 13'. These structural walls are set 4' below grade, where they measure 8' to 9' wide. Within the embankment, they gradually step inward, narrowing to 1'-6" at the highest point. The space between the embankments is filled with ballast. Steel-reinforced concrete columns with footings embedded in the railroad embankment support the stationhouses, stairs/escalator, platform, and steel canopies. As noted, each of the two stationhouses utilizes a reinforced square concrete structural frame (10" x 10"), which supports a flat concrete roof system and frames the glass and aluminum curtain walls/masonry walls. The visible foundation for both primary and secondary stationhouses is comprised of reinforced concrete with a rubbed finish.

3. Walls/Openings:

The primary (Austin) stationhouse utilizes aluminum and glass curtain walls and expanses of gray-glazed brick on both the interior and exterior. The original glass and metal curtain wall for the secondary (Mason) stationhouse has been removed and infilled with red brick. Both stationhouses connect to the original cast concrete embankments. The stairs and escalator enclosures at the platform level consist of a curtain wall system like that of the stationhouses but with perforated stainless-steel grilles installed on top of the safety glass.

The windows and doors in the primary stationhouse consist of aluminum and glass panels set within aluminum framing. The altered secondary (Mason) stationhouse has a solid metal security door, and the original openings have been infilled with red brick on the outer wythe and a combination of brick and concrete masonry units on the inner wythe.

4. Roof:

The primary and secondary stationhouses both have a 9" thick reinforced concrete slab roof that cantilevers over the outer walls of the structures. The cantilever projects approximately 3' on the east and south elevations and 10' on the west, providing additional shelter to the entryways. A four-ply tar and gravel roof with aluminum gravel stops rests on top of the concrete slabs, collecting and redirecting rain and meltwater. At the track level, the canopy roof comprises curved corrugated metal panels that rest atop T-shaped steel supports.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Primary Stationhouse:

The 25' x 50' Austin stationhouse is oriented north-south through the railroad embankment. The south end projects approximately 10' beyond the concrete retaining wall and contains the street entrance on its west elevation. This leads to an unpaid lobby area (approximately 25' x 10') where customers can buy tickets or review transit maps. Aluminum and glass curtain walls provide natural light on the west and southwest corners. The walls to the south and east are clad with grey glazed brick.

Moving from south to north, the right (east) side of the stationhouse contains a ticket agent's booth with an attached toilet room and porter's closet. The booth (4'-6" by 6'-6") has a stainless-steel base and walls topped with large glass windows containing a sliding ticket window and counter and a 3" high flat metal roof. This is connected to a structure (4'-6" x 8') clad with dark grey tile. Accessible from the agent's booth, this structure includes a small toilet room and a porter's closet, which opens into the stationhouse. (The tile in this area matches the material used in the electrical room on the platform level.) These enclosures are set back 3'-6" from the right (east) stationhouse wall, creating a narrow passage enclosed with metal gates at each end. This area is used for storage. To the left (west) of the agent's booth is a swinging gate for wheelchair access, two modern turnstiles, and a fixed aluminum gate. The fare equipment connects to an electrical conduit running along the ceiling. A glass-fronted aluminum case displays transit maps and information against the left (west) wall of the stationhouse.

Continuing north, the area beyond the turnstiles leads to a single concrete stair on the left (west) and a combination stair and escalator on the right (east).

2. Secondary (Mason Avenue) Stationhouse:

Similar to the primary stationhouse, the smaller secondary stationhouse at Mason (18' x 50') is oriented north-south through the railroad embankment with a projecting south portion providing street access. It too has walls that have a combination of gray glazed brick (manufactured by Darlington Brick) and small light

gray porcelain tiles (1”x2”). The ceiling is white-painted concrete, and the concrete floor has been painted red. As the fenestration for this structure has been filled in, there is no natural light, and the interior is illuminated with modern fixtures containing exposed fluorescent tubes. A triangular porter’s closet remains behind an angled gray brick wall at the southeast corner of the stationhouse. Originally, this stationhouse contained the same equipment found in the primary (Austin) stationhouse, but due to its smaller size, it had one less turnstile and lacked an agent’s bathroom. The agent’s booth, turnstiles, and gate were removed and replaced with SCADA equipment (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition). High-voltage electrical conduit runs along the ceiling.

3. Mechanical Features:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation

The enclosed agent’s booth in the primary (Austin) stationhouse contains under-the-counter heating and air conditioning units, while electrical baseboard and wall heaters are used for the porter’s closet and bathroom. Originally the agent’s booth contained a small stainless-steel vent with adjustable louvers on its south wall, but this has since been removed or covered. The primary and secondary (Mason) stationhouses utilize a ventilation stack in the porter’s closet which extends up through the roof.

At the track level, heat lamps beneath the canopies provide warmth for passengers waiting for trains during the fall and winter months and can be triggered with a button.

b. Lighting

The exterior lighting for the stationhouses is provided by fluorescent box-like fixtures installed beneath the cantilevered portion of the roof. Within the stationhouses, rectangular fixtures of varying lengths are used throughout, including above the stairs and escalator. Electrical conduit runs along the ceiling on the interior and exterior. (Originally this ran through the concrete to avoid surfacing mounting.) On the station platform, fluorescent box fixtures illuminate the area under the canopies Mercury vapor luminaires are used for post-top lighting on the ends of the platform. Lighting controls are in the agent’s booth.

c. Plumbing

The agent’s bathroom and the sink in the porter’s closet are connected to a sewer system built into the primary stationhouse, which drains to a connector on W. Corcoran Street. This system includes drainage lines to the escalator

pit, stairs, and stationhouse roof. The secondary stationhouse has a mop sink that utilizes a similar system.

D. Site:

1. Primary Stationhouse:
Located on the northeast corner of N. Austin Boulevard and W. Corcoran Place, the primary stationhouse sits within an oblong area of raised concrete sidewalk surrounded by steel safety railings. A set of stairs provides access to the W. Corcoran Street south crosswalk. Directly south of the stationhouse, a modest concrete-edged bump out provides a small, planted area containing a lawn and a single tree. Further to the east is a small shelter protecting bike racks. The landform slopes down to street level and includes a concrete sidewalk that leads to a paved angled parking area.

2. Secondary (Mason Avenue) Stationhouse:
The secondary stationhouse is located at the intersection of N. Mason Avenue and W. Corcoran Street. The stationhouse sits between two concrete bump-outs, each containing a planter and a single tree. Diagonal parking continues east of the stationhouse.

Part III. Sources of Information

A. Architectural Drawings:

Dittrich & Gibson, *Lake Street Track Elevation* (1961), Architectural drawings, CTA Archives, Chicago, Illinois.

Alfred Benesch & Company, *Foundation Plans, Sections, Details and Construction Phasing* (1961), Architectural drawings, CTA Archives, Chicago, Illinois.

Kralovec & Best, Sewer, Water, Ventilation and Electrical Plans and Schedules (1961), Architectural drawings, CTA Archives, Chicago, Illinois.

Dubin, Dubin and Moutoussamy, *Fare Control Retrofit Program Volume III* (1995), Architectural drawings, CTA Archives, Chicago, Illinois.

B. Historic Photographs:
CTA owns and maintains a collection of archival photographs in its headquarters at 567 W. Lake Street, Chicago, IL. The oldest photos of the Lake Street elevated line show the original 1892 construction of steel trestles. There are photos of 1899 showing the site for the Lake Line extension and several other images of 1903 and 1904, which were taken in response to personal injury lawsuits against the elevated company. Photos of ca. 1912

show the original at-grade crossing and station at N. Austin Boulevard. A series of 1955 photos show platform improvements that had been made to the original at-grade Austin Station. Several folders contain photographs taken in October of 1962 and January 1963 documenting the construction and completion of the five stations built for the Lake Street Elevation Project. These include images of the dedication ceremonies of October 27, 1962, officiated by Mayor Richard J. Daley. Additional photos taken of the station in October of 1964 are included in this series.

Digital photos of the Austin Station dating from 2007 were accessed through CTA records. Although unlabeled, these photos are associated with the replacement of the corrugated metal roof in the same year.

C. CTA Records and Publications:

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"Lake Track Elevation Project Gets Underway," *CTA Transit News* XIV, no. 8 (August, 1961): 2. http://irm-cta.org/EEMagazines/TransitNews07/1961-08.pdf.

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APPENDIX A – HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

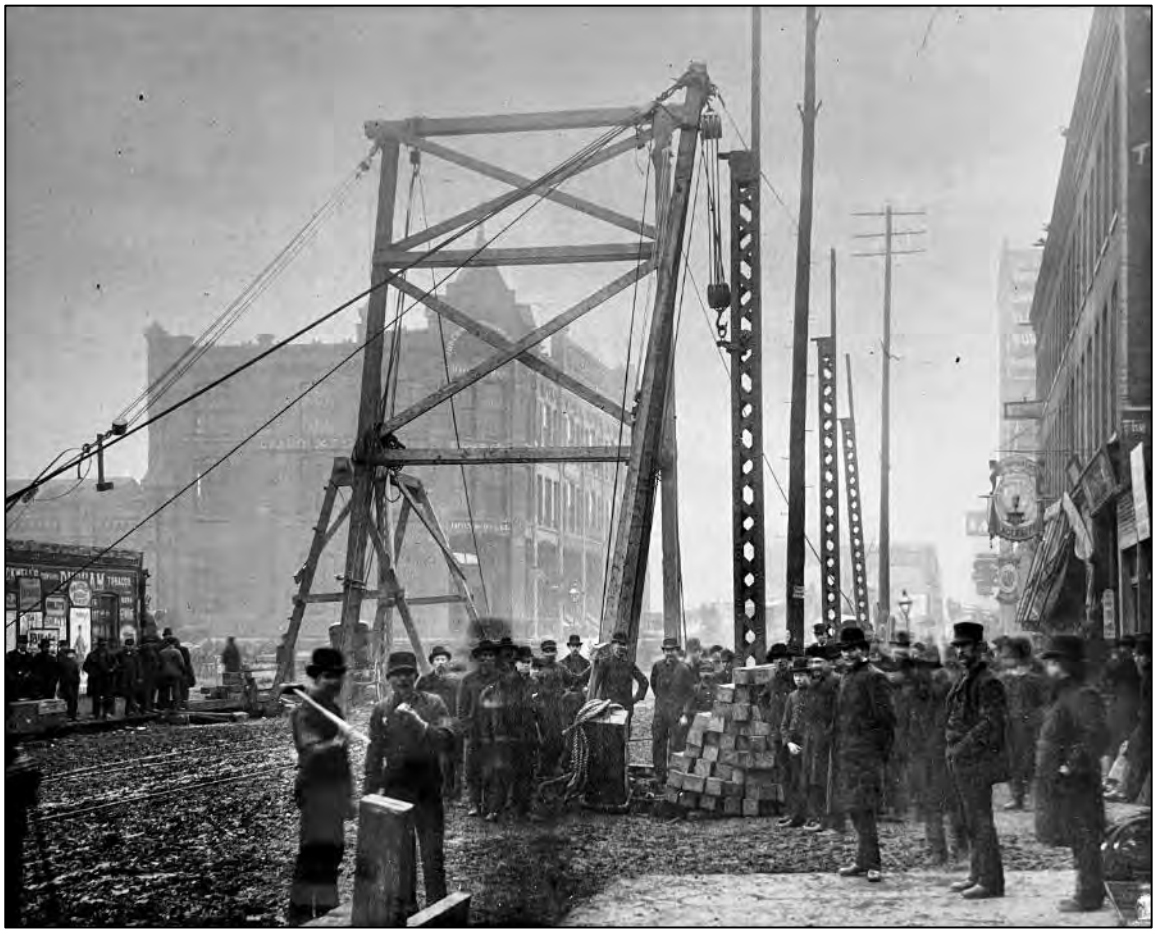

Figure 1: Beginning the erection of the Lake Street L columns at the northeast corner of W. Lake and N. Milwaukee Avenue, 1892. Collection of George Krambles. CTA Photo H290.

Figure 2: View of the 1892 construction of the Lake Street L between N. Halsted Avenue and N. Western Boulevard. Collection of George Krambles. CTA Photo H292.

Figure 3: View looking east towards the at-grade Austin Station, c.1912. CTA Photo H-388-1.

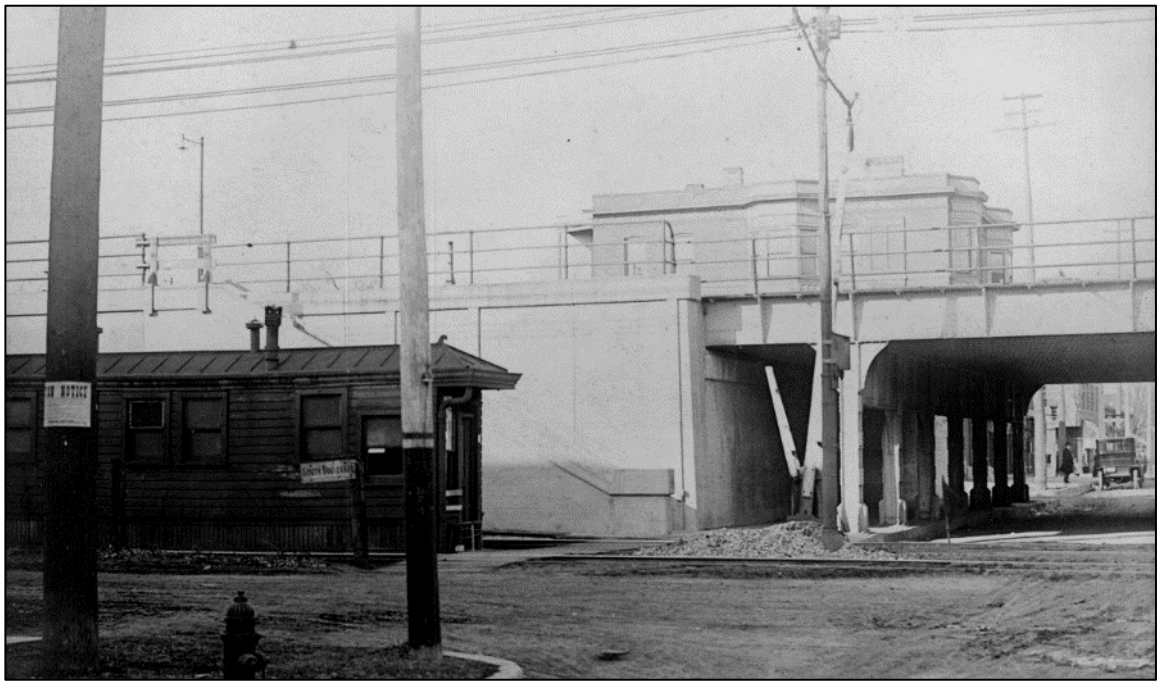

Figure 4: View from Austin Avenue facing northwest towards the watchman's shanty, c.1912. CTA Photo H-388-6.

Figure 5: View looking northwest towards the Central Avenue Station (c.1955). CTA Photo, unlabelled.

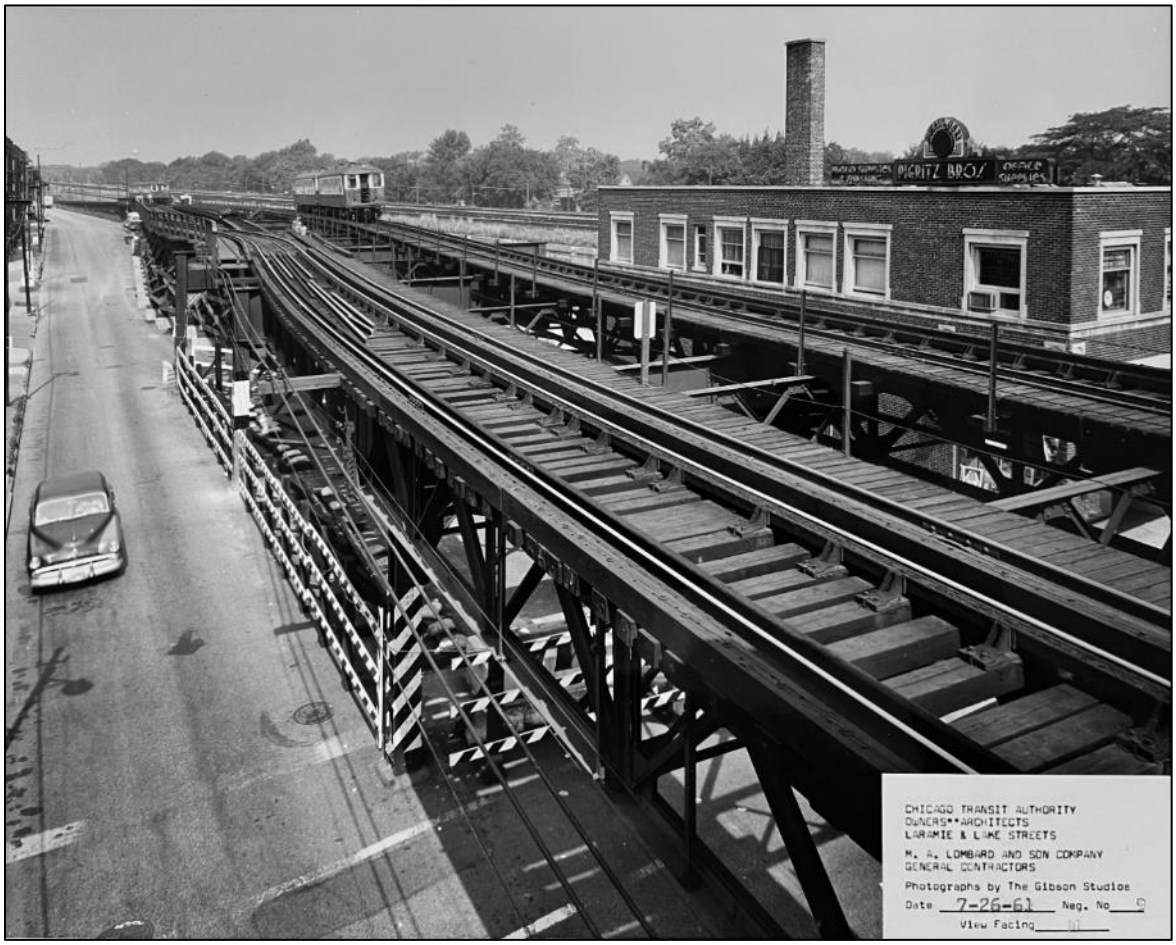

Figure 6: This 1961 photo (prior to work beginning) shows the elevated tracks west of Laramie Station, which parallel the Northwest Railway embankment on the right (north). In the distance on the left is the ramp down to the at-grade portion of the line. CTA Photo from general contractor (No. 9).

Figure 7: This 1962 view looks west from the Laramie Avenue Elevated Station. On the right a new steel structure connects the tracks to the Northwest Railway embankment. CTA Photo 182-62 #14.

Figure 8: Construction of the Oak Park platform and canopy atop concrete footers within the embankment, 1962. CTA Photo 325-62 #8.

Figure 9: View of Ridgeland Station looking west (1962) showing the new platform and canopy on the embankment and the at-grades tracks. CTA Photo 366-62 #1.

Figure 10: Removal of a portion of the concrete wall of the embankment to construct the Oak Park Stationhouse in 1963. Note the customer assistant kiosk, which has already been installed. A bridge connects the new station to the old wooden platform. CTA Photo 111-63 #18.

Figure 11: Construction of the Central Stationhouse in 1962. Note formwork for the steel-reinforced concrete roof. CTA Photo 111-63 #30.

Figure 12: Demolition of the Oak Park station, platform and canopy with completion of the new Oak Park Station, 1963. CTA Photo 266-63 #12.

Figure 13: Mayor Richard J. Daley speaking at the dedication ceremonies of the elevation of the Lake Line on October 27, 1962. CTA Photo 366-62 #41.

Figure 14: View of the CTA Austin Stationhouse entrance in October 1964. CTA Photo 437-64 #2.

Figure 15: Interior view of the Austin Stationhouse in 1963. CTA Photo 111-63 #20.

Figure 16: View of the Secondary (Mason Street) Stationhouse entrance, 1964. CTA Photo 437-64 #14.

Figure 17: Interior view of the Secondary (Mason) Stationhouse, 1964. CTA Photo 437-64 #13.

Figure 18: View of the Austin Station platform enclosure with stairs and escalator in 1964. CTA Photo 437-64 #8.

Figure 19: View of the platform stairwell of the Austin Station in 1962. CTA Photo 348-62 #19.

APPENDIX B – RENDERINGS AND REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Figure 1. Conceptual rendering of the proposed Lake Line track elevation project with new stationhouse. This was published in CTA's, *New Horizons of the Chicago Metropolitan Area* (1958).

Figure 2. Artist's sketch of the proposed stationhouse for the elevated Lake Line, 1962. Courtesy of the CTA.

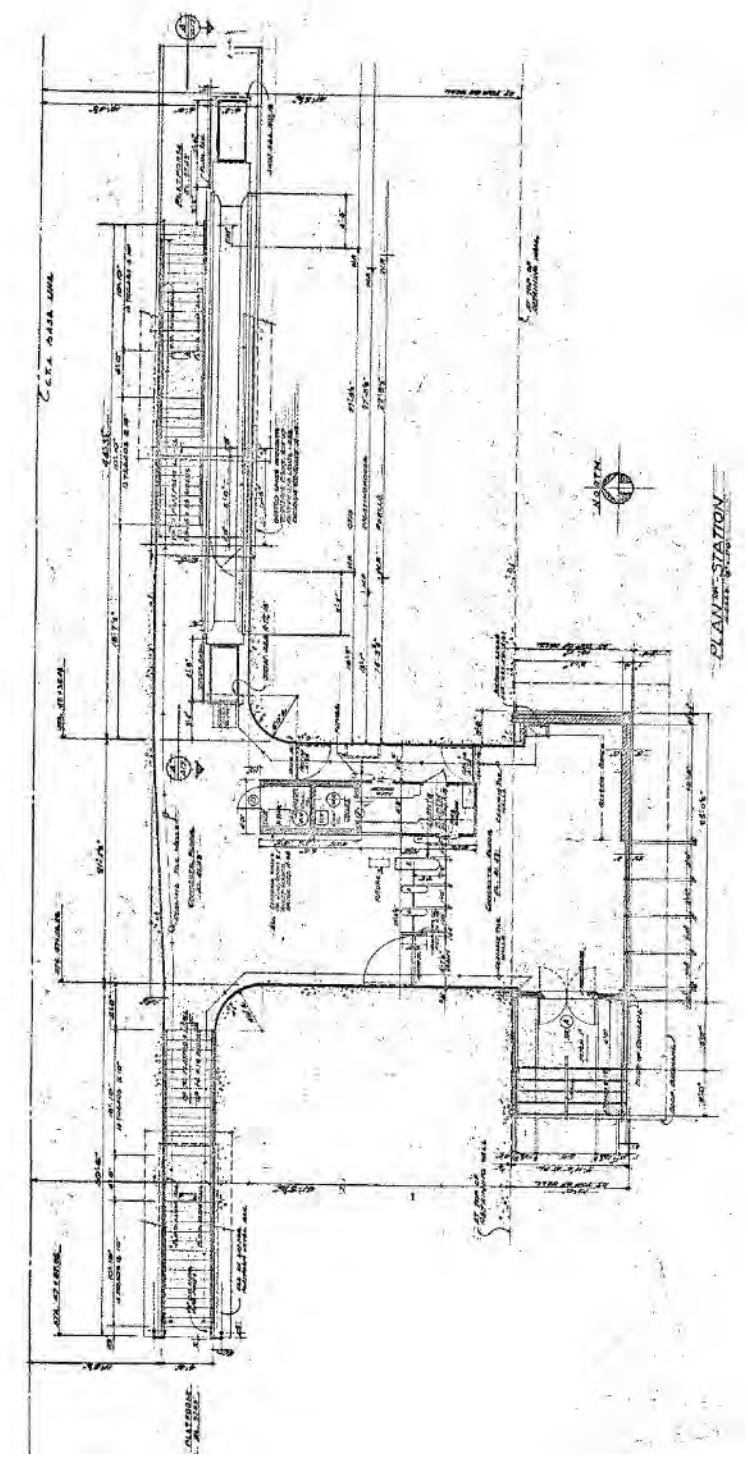

Figure 3: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Austin Stationhouse plan, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

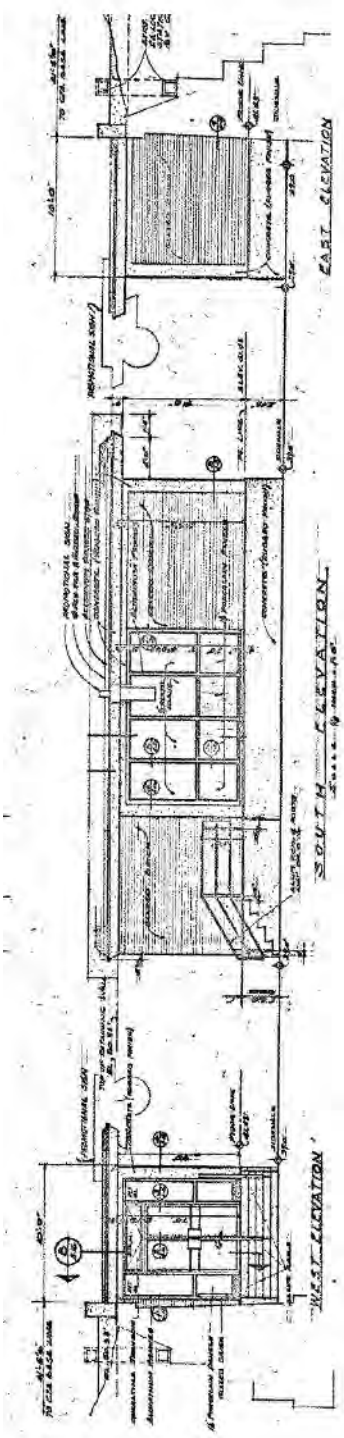

Figure 4: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Austin Stationhouse exterior elevations, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

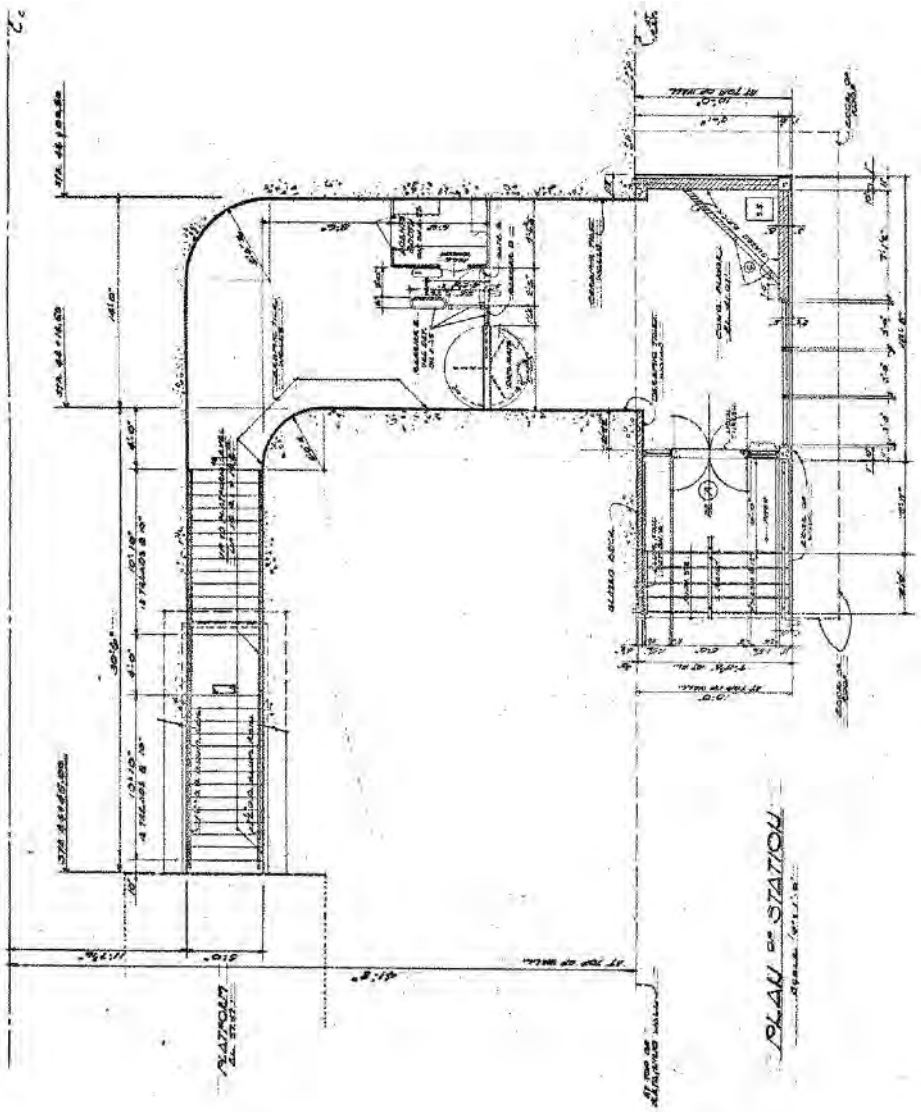

Figure 5: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Mason (auxiliary) Stationhouse plan, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

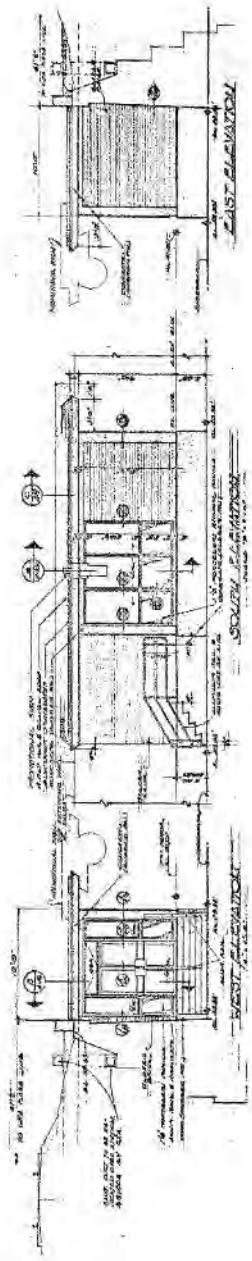

Figure 6: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Mason (auxiliary) Stationhouse exterior elevations, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

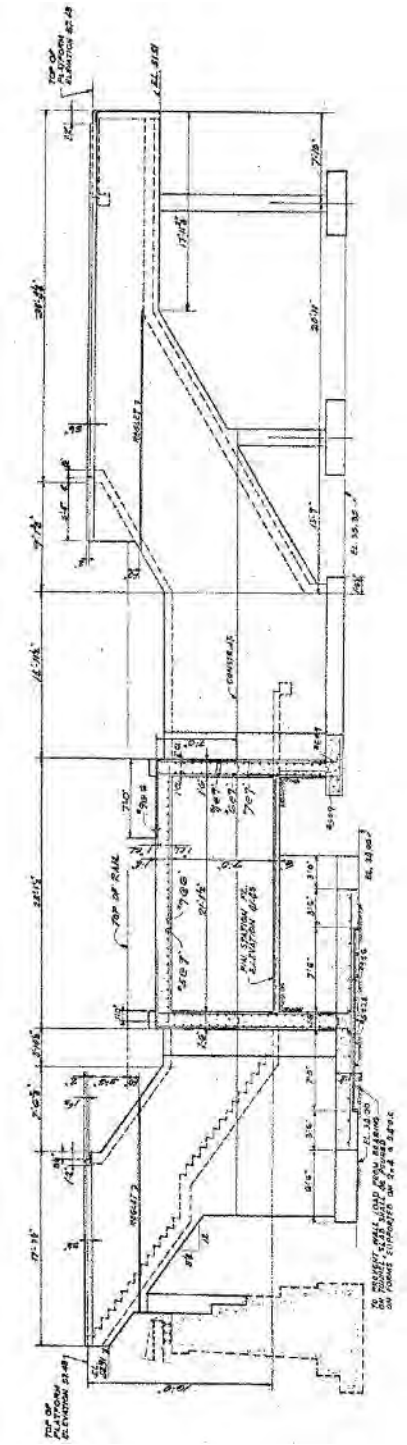

Figure 7: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Austion Stationhouse section, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

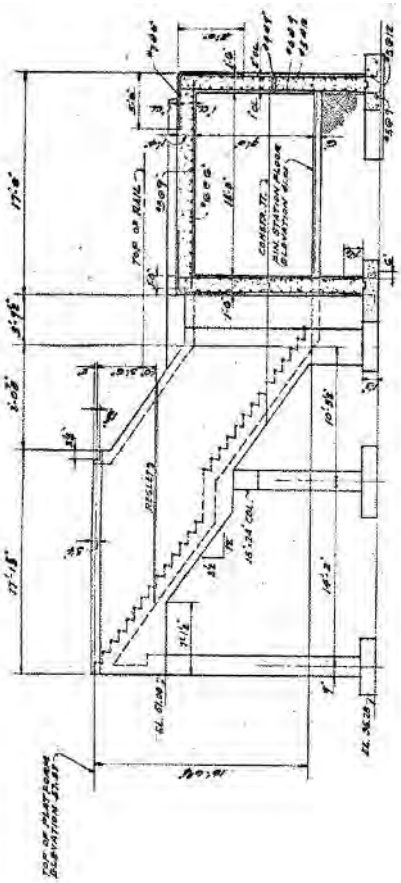

Figure 8: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Mason Stationhouse section, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

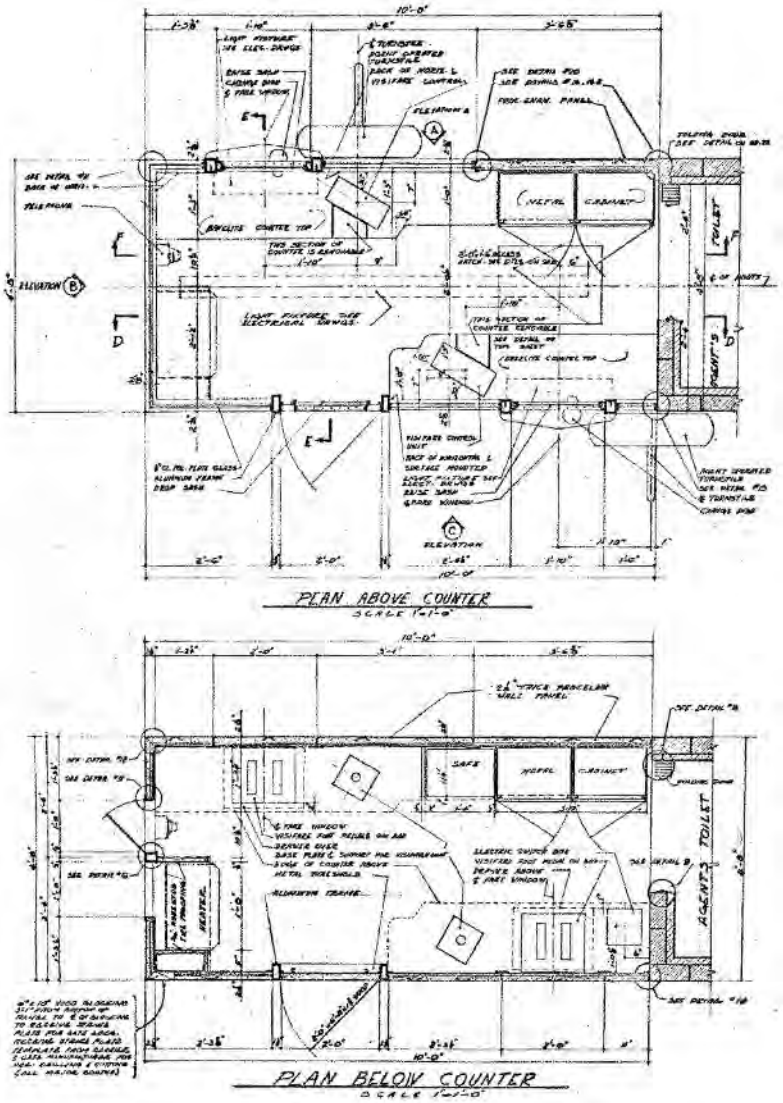

Figure 9: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Austion Stationhouse Customer Assistant Kiosk plan, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

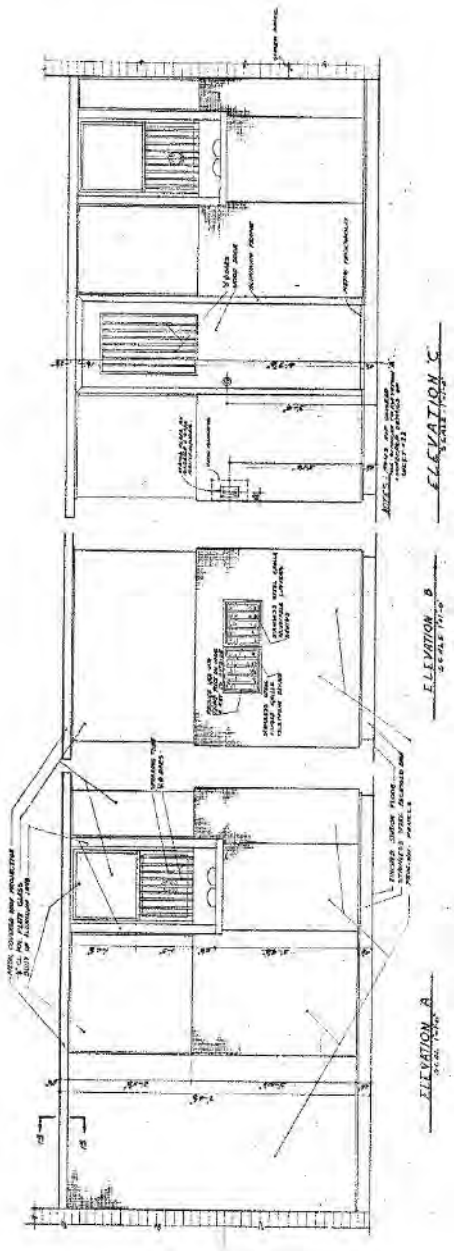

Figure 10: Figure 7: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Austion Stationhouse Customer Assistant Kiosk elevations, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

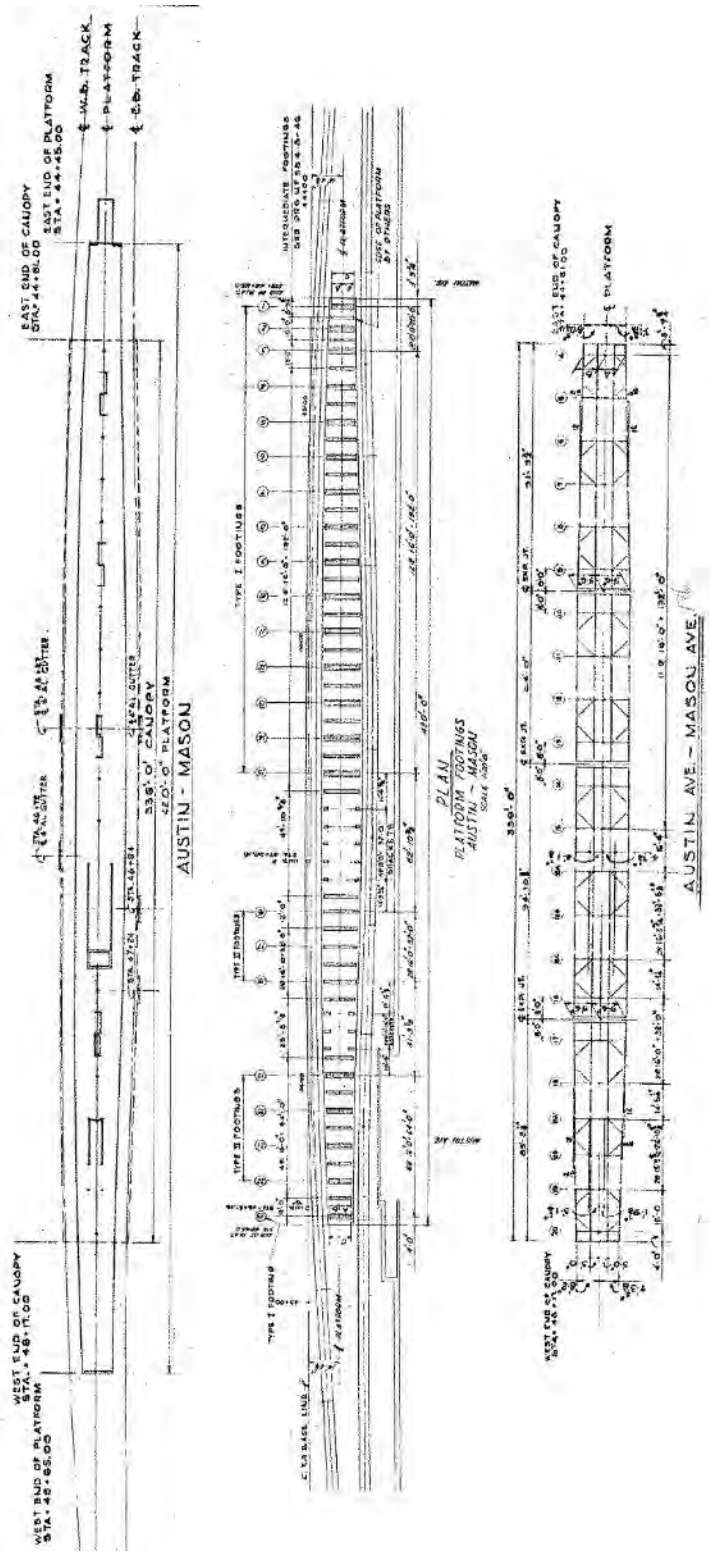

Figure 11: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Austin platform, 1961. Image on the left illustrates the overall layout, the center shows the footing plan, and the far right shows the location and framing for the steel canopy. Courtesy of the CTA.

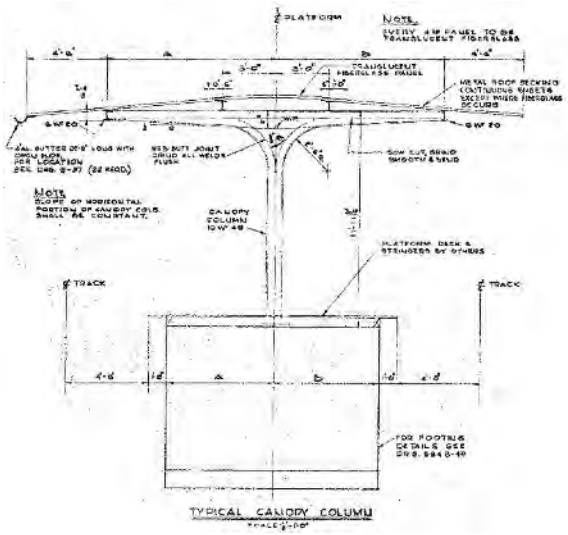

Figure 12: Excerpt from historical drawings showing a typical steel canopy column, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

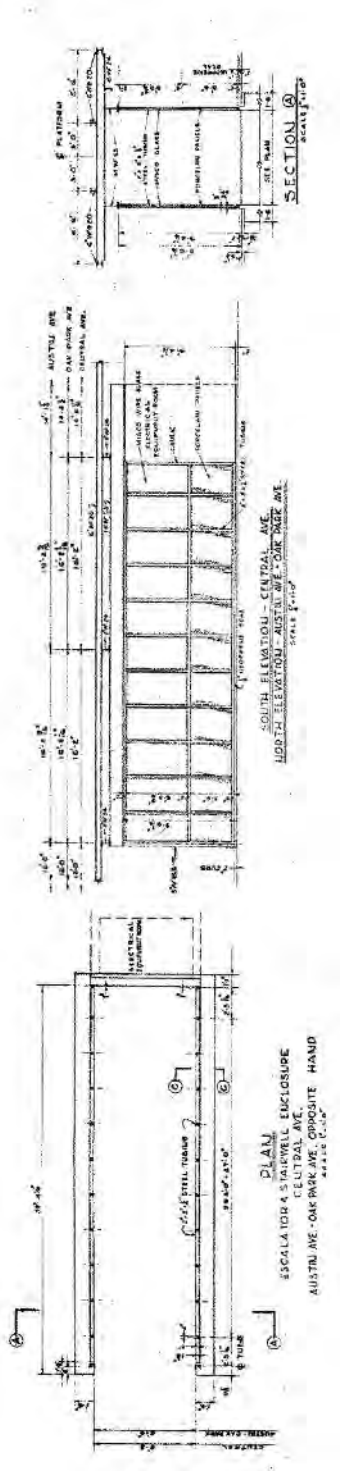

Figure 13: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Austion Station showing the escalator and stairwell enclosure, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

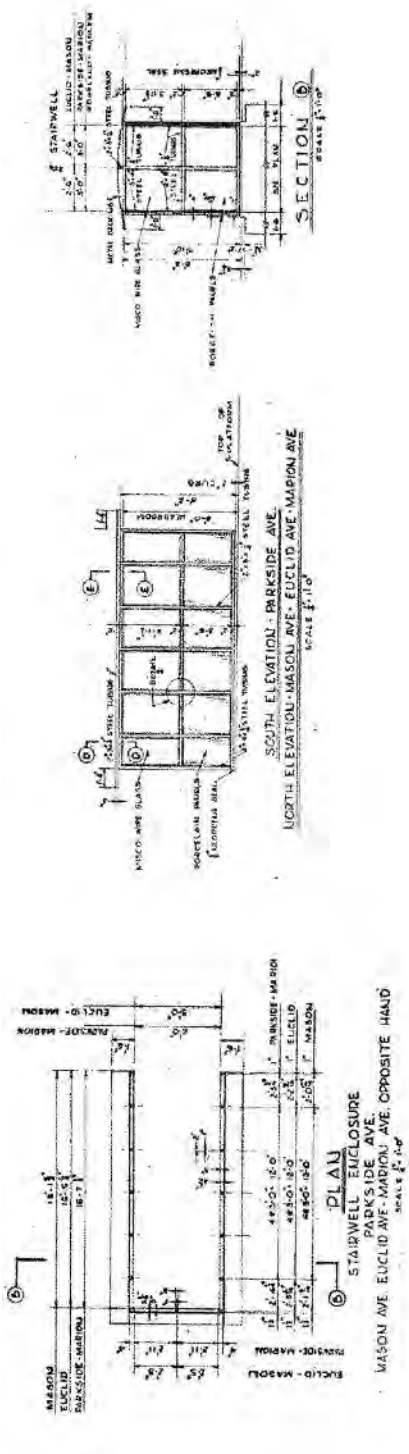

Figure 14: Excerpt from historical drawings of the Austion Station showing the stairwell enclosure on the east end of the platform, 1961. Courtesy of the CTA.

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LAKE STREET ELEVATED RAILWAY — HAER No. IL- 1211-A
LAKE LINE AUSTIN STATION
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Leslie Schwartz, photographer, 2023

IL-1211-A-01	View of the Austin Station looking northeast from the southwest corner of N. Austin Boulevard and South Boulevard. Pictured are the platform and canopy atop the concrete embankment and ground-level primary stationhouse. A steel viaduct spans across N. Austin Boulevard.
IL-1211-A-02	View looking northwest from South Boulevard, showing the platform and canopy at the upper level and the south and east façades of the Austin Stationhouse at ground level.
IL-1211-A-03	View looking east from N. Austin Boulevard showing the entrance into the Austin Stationhouse. Note the original concrete stairs, stoop, and glazed brick wall on the north side of the entryway. The replacement aluminum safety railings and fluorescent lighting fixtures on the underside of the concrete roof are visible. An additional layer was added to the original flat concrete roof.
IL-1211-A-04	Interior view of the south end of the Austin Stationhouse lobby looking southeast. Note the original glazed brick walls in the corner and the original curtain wall system just to the west.
IL-1211-A-05	Interior view of the Austin Stationhouse lobby looking northeast. The customer assistant kiosk is original, although its historic porcelain panels were later replaced with stainless steel sheets. The fare equipment and turnstiles are modern additions.
IL-1211-A-06	Interior view of the Austin Stationhouse lobby looking northwest. Note the original concrete floor and painted concrete ceiling. Floor-mounted way-finding signage against the wall was added later. The fluorescent ceiling fixtures were also later replaced.

IL-1211-A-07 Interior view of the Austin Stationhouse lobby looking southwest. Although much of the curtain wall system is original, light blue porcelain panels that once filled the lower sashes are no longer intact.

IL-1211-A-08 View of the Austin Stationhouse lobby's north end looking southeast. An original tile enclosure attached to the customer assistant kiosk contains a small bathroom accessible by the ticket agent and a janitor's closet and sink. These are original features.

IL-1211-A-09 View of the Austin Stationhouse lobby's north end looking west towards a stair leading to the train platform.

IL-1211-A-10 View of the Austin Stationhouse lobby's north end looking east. The stairway and escalator lead to the train platform. The stairway, escalator, and tile walls are all original features.

IL-1211-A-11 View of the Austin Station platform looking west towards the east enclosure, which stands at the top of the stairway and escalator. Although the enclosure's original frame remains, the porcelain panels that filled its lower sashes and wire glass above were replaced with safety glass. The metal security grilles and swinging doors were added later.

IL-1211-A-12 View from the Austin Station platform looking west. While the steel canopy supports are original, the corrugated metal roofing is a later replacement. The lighting standards are also replacements.

IL-1211-A-13 View of Austin Station's platform and west enclosure looking east. This enclosure originally had safety railings but was open to the elements. It was later partially enclosed for weather protection and additional security.

IL-1211-A-14 View of the Austin secondary stationhouse (Mason Avenue), looking northeast. The original metal and glass curtain wall entrance was replaced with non-matching brick and a metal security door. The original concrete stoop remains but has been extensively patched. The extant original aluminum safety railing is in poor condition.

IL-1211-A-15 View of the west façade of the Austin secondary (Mason Avenue) stationhouse looking east. The cantilevered concrete roof remains, but a new layer has been added to the top, somewhat changing its profile. The lighting fixture and applied conduit are also later replacements.

IL-1211-A-16 View of the Austin secondary (Mason Avenue) stationhouse's east and south facades looking northwest. Note that the electrical conduit enters at two locations.

IL-1211-A-17 Interior view of the Austin secondary (Mason Avenue) stationhouse looking south. This stationhouse now serves as a communications and logistics center.

IL-1211-A-18 Interior view of the Austin secondary (Mason Avenue) stationhouse looking north. The original floor, ceiling, and walls with ceramic tiles remain.

IL-1211-A-19 Interior view of the Austin secondary (Mason Avenue) stationhouse looking west. Note the loss of much of the original tile cladding, which has exposed areas of perforated metal lath.

IL-1211-A-20 This interior view of the Austin secondary (Mason Avenue) stationhouse looking west at the abandoned concrete stairs which originally connected to the train platform.

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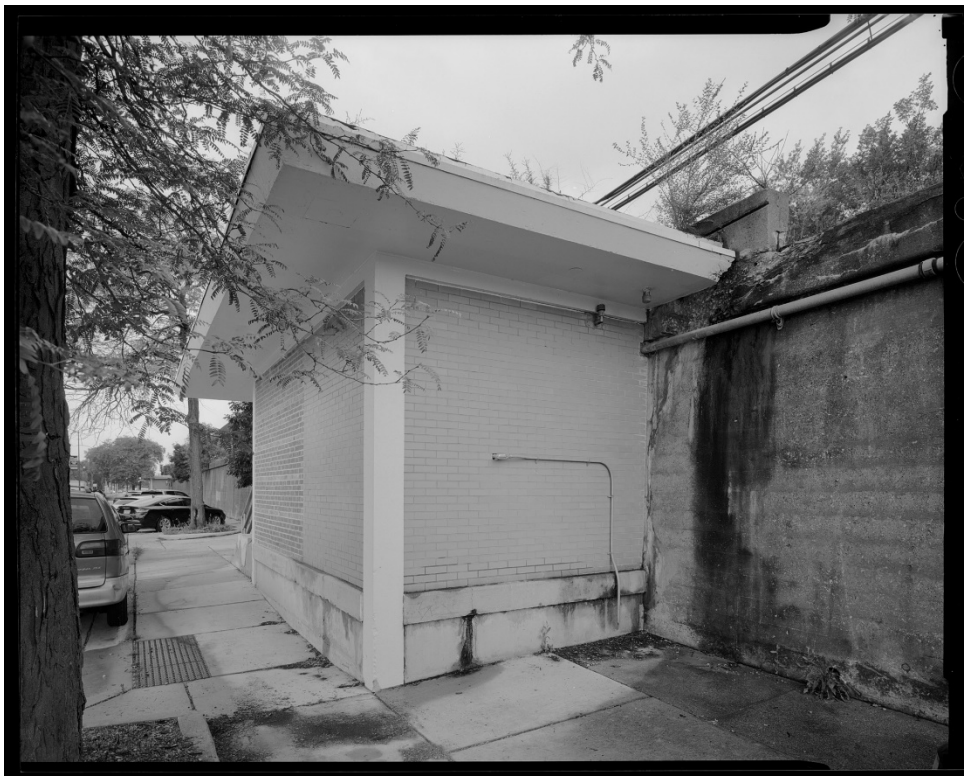

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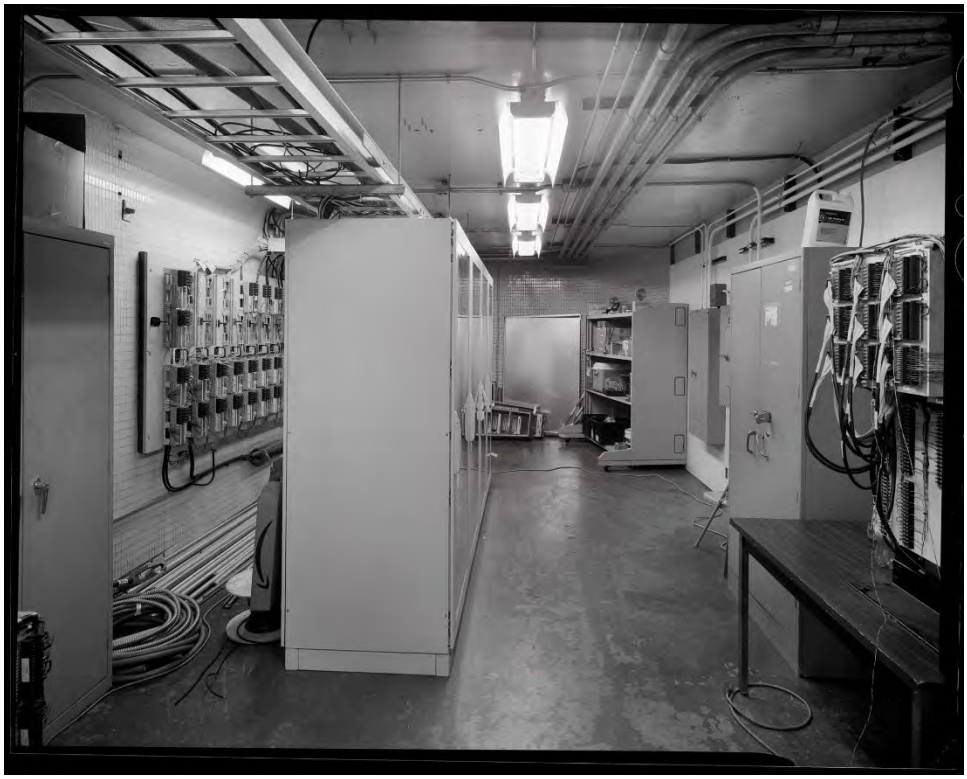

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