



SAFE RETURN TO WORK SUMMIT

METRA AND DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS OUTLINE STEPS TO WELCOME EMPLOYEES BACK SAFELY

Metra worked with the Building Owners and Managers Association of Chicago (BOMA) to host a Safe Return to Work Summit last month. The goal was to gather business executives from around Chicago to address some of the scientific, business and psychological narratives related to COVID-19. More than 1,000 people attended the session in person and virtually.

Both Metra and BOMA know that commuters won't return to work unless they feel safe on the trains and in the buildings, so a major component of the summit was to address the many steps that have been taken to clean and disinfect workspaces and railcars. Janice R. Thomas, Metra's chief of staff, highlighted Metra's cleaning efforts, as well as its efforts to encourage safe behavior by customers and to communicate its "Commute with Confidence" message.

"We are meticulously cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting our trains daily. And, we're following the strictest CDC guidelines in doing so," she said. "Remember when you could not find hand sanitizer on store shelves? Well, Metra was out in front of that – and we installed hand sanitizers on every car in a matter of weeks."

Part of that strategy, she said, is to overcome initial, unfounded fears that public transportation is unsafe. Studies have shown no correlation around the world between public transit use and infection rates, she told attendees.

Anthony Scacco, the COO of Riverside Investment and Development, and Heather Spearman, regional operations manager for Jones Lang LaSalle, outlined all the changes that building owners and their tenants have taken to create safe workspaces. Those include improved ventilation and better filtration, the use of more touchless controls, enhanced



cleaning, changes in common areas to promote distancing, staggered work shifts and a variety of other measures.

David Caspar, U.S. CEO of BMO Financial Group, discussed the economic imperatives of returning to the office and examined the critical nature of in-person collaboration for companies' workforces. He earned a round of applause from the audience when he said:

"When people talk about the new normal, I say, no, this is not the new normal, this is the abnormal. But we are getting back to normal – and normal is getting back to the office."

Finally, Dr. Robert Murphy of Northwestern Medicine provided updates on the virus and vaccination efforts, as well as his perspective on the current environment and what steps are needed to reach a safe workplace for employees. He praised the fast development of highly effective vaccines as well as Metra's efforts to create safe trains.

"You've done a beautiful job cleaning up the train system and making safe travel," he said. "The numbers tell the story. There's nobody on these trains that has gotten infected."

The summit was sponsored by BMO Harris Bank, William Blair and Wintrust Bank, and Crain's Chicago Business was the exclusive media sponsor. It can be viewed on Metra's YouTube channel, [youtube.com/metra](https://www.youtube.com/metra).