



From 'garish' to inviting: Riders review new CTA 95th St. station

Rosalind Rossi & Jacob Wittich | June 17, 2016



Renovations to the 95th Street terminal are planned to be completed by the start of 2017. | CTA

Final renderings of the Chicago Transit Authority's \$280 million reconstruction of the 95th Street Red Line station drew mixed reviews Friday, with riders rating it everything from "garish" to appealingly modern.

Others were neutral about the latest design and its bold red features, but were happy to see the improved functionality of the busiest station on the Red Line South. The renderings unveiled by the CTA updated previous 2014 "conceptual" ones. The earlier drawings featured lots of glass, a gray roof and a red stripe that wrapped around the side of station terminals.

The latest design includes much more red as part of a “visual reference to the Red Line,” CTA spokesman Jeffrey Tolman said. The CTA hopes the result will add up to the agency’s “signature station,” he said.

In the new, final design, a wide red stripe runs the length of the roof of the complex, which includes terminals on both sides of the street and is more than a block long overall. Entrances are outlined in massive red blocks and emblazoned with “CTA.”



The grey roof in a 2014 “conceptual” rendering (left) of the CTA’s new 95th Street Red Line station was replaced Friday with a final design (right) that uses a large red stripe across the roof, intended as a “visual reference to the Red Line.” Source| CTA

Amid concern about terrorism, at least one rider wondered if the heavy use of red, especially on the roof, might raise safety questions.

“I understand why people could be concerned [that the red stripes] would make the station an aerial target, but I think people visiting the 95th [Street] station have different safety concerns with crime that they would worry about,” said Albert Riley, a Red Line commuter.

The bigger turnoff for Riley, however, was the extensive use of knockout red.

“The new design is a little garish. Most people know they’re riding the CTA and they know it’s the Red Line if you’re at the 95th stop,” Riley said of the design’s entrances.

CTA President Dorval Carter Jr., speaking at a Friday press conference at the 95th Street station, touted the final renderings.

“The new designs present a much bolder architectural statement, benefitting what will be the signature station of the CTA system,” Carter said.



An original 2014 “conceptual” rendering (left) of the entrance of one of two 95th Street Red Line station buildings has been replaced by a final 2016 rendering (right) with a bolder, red entrance. Source| CTA

Construction to rebuild the 95th Street terminal and add a second one on the south side of the street began in 2014 and will be finished by early 2017, officials said. The design was developed by architectural firm Exp as well as the project’s general contractor, Paschen Milhouse Joint Venture IV.

Both the 2014 conceptual renderings — completed before any contractor was chosen — and the final design released Friday feature covered bus bays and pedestrian walkways to protect riders from weather, as well as a second-story pedestrian bridge connecting the terminals north and south of 95th Street.

Under the new design, passengers dropped off at the new terminal on the south side of 95th Street will no longer have to navigate busy vehicle traffic to enter the rail station on the north side of 95th Street. They can opt for the second-story overpass instead.

Tracey Woods, a North Lawndale resident, said the station’s new design looks more updated and inviting.



Renderings of a revised design of the CTA's 95th Street terminal were unveiled Friday. | CTA

“It looks safer and clean because the entire outside wall [of the station] is clear, so you can see what’s going on inside,” she said. “The new design looks more inviting and open to the public.”

Chance’s Walker, a student at Saint Xavier University and far South Side resident, said she has no preference between the station’s two designs as long the final product helps with her commute.

“It normally takes me an hour and a half to two hours to get to work,” Walker said. “If these projects can make my commute faster, it would save me time and less [money spent] on Ubers.”

CTA officials originally pegged the project at \$240 million but upped the price tag to \$280 million after adding track improvements from the 95th Street station to the CTA’s 98th Street yard, as well as signal and power work.

Also Friday, Carter spotlighted a series of upcoming CTA bus and rail service improvements for the South and Far South Sides. The first of them will begin Monday when the No. 26 South Shore Express bus route’s service will be extended, starting earlier on weekday mornings and running later in the evening.



Chicago Transit Authority President Dorval Carter and Deputy Mayor Andrea Zopp on Friday unveiled the latest look for the revamped 95th Street terminal and announced service enhancements to several South Side bus routes. | Jacob Wittich/Sun-Times