



NEWS CHICAGO METRO/STATE

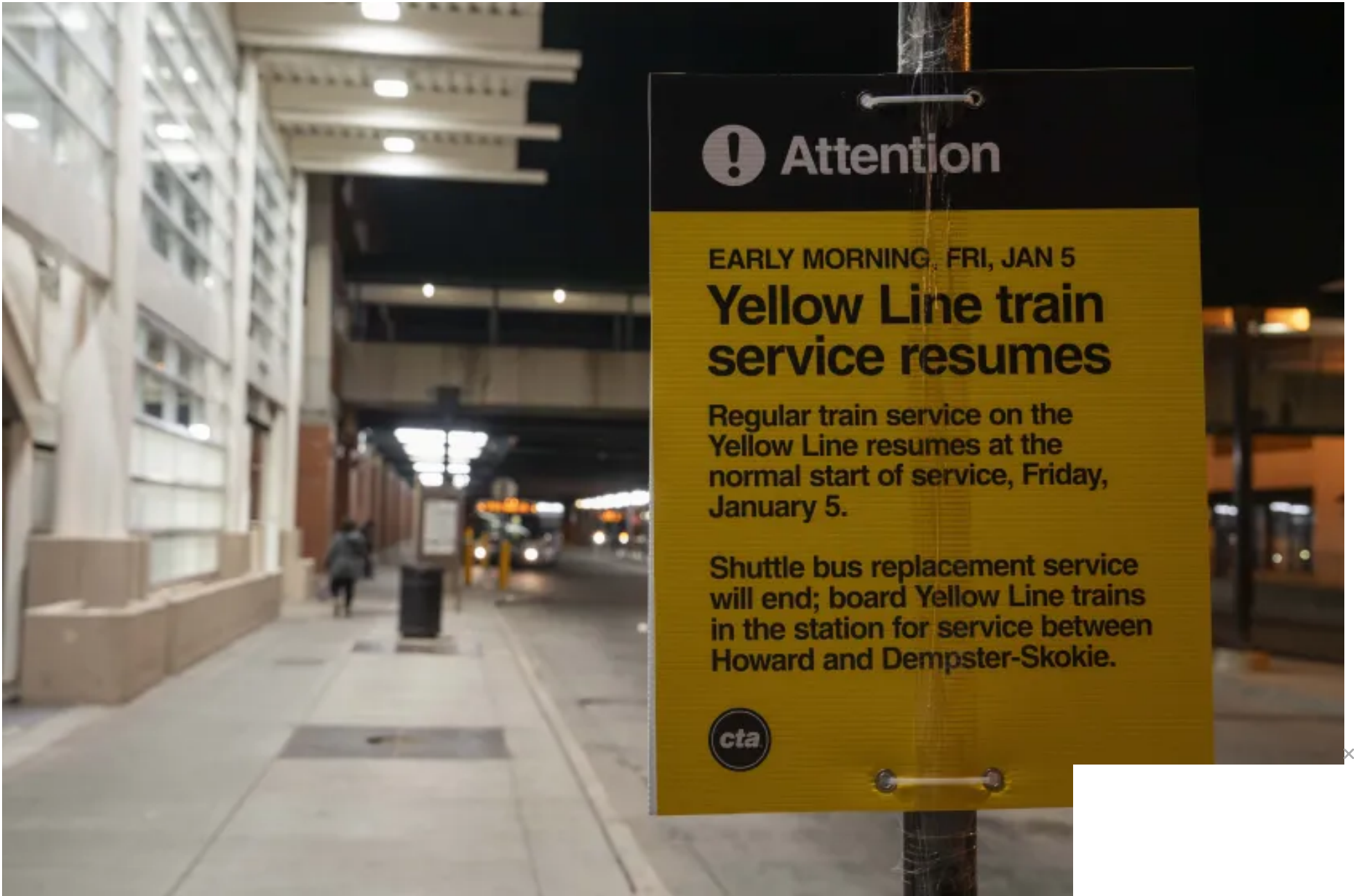
## Victims of Yellow Line crash hesitant to ride again

Service on the CTA Yellow Line resumed Friday after a nearly two-month suspension.

By Isabel Funk | Jan 5, 2024, 6:40pm CST

    SHARE





Yellow Line trains to and from Skokie resumed Friday after they were suspended following a train crash on Nov. 16, but some riders who experienced the crash are hesitant to return. | Pat N...

**For Chicago, By Chicago**

Support local news at the heart of the city.

**Become A Member Today!**

Donald Wheeler, 59, is not ready to get back on a CTA Yellow Line train.

The Yellow Line, running from Dempster Street in Skokie to Howard Street at the Chicago-Evanston border, returned to service Friday. But some riders, like Wheeler, who experienced the Nov. 16 crash that triggered the seven-week service suspension, remain hesitant.

“I was very fortunate not to have any physical injuries, but the images I saw, I can recall vividly that day,” he said. “The impact of the crash and the legacy of it will never go away in my mind.”

The crash occurred when a Yellow Line train approaching the Howard station at 26.9 mph collided with a snowplow on the tracks. Seven CTA employees and 31 passengers suffered varying injuries.

The National Transportation Safety Board is still investigating the crash, and a full report is expected later this year, but officials have reported that debris on the tracks and an expected stopping distance that turned out to be inaccurate may have contributed to the accident.

When Steve Helmer, 65, heard the Yellow Line was reopening, his first reaction was to “flash back to Nov. 16,” something he said happens often. Helmer was on the train with his wife, daughter and twin 2-year-old grandchildren, “hoping to enjoy an afternoon in downtown Chicago,” when “everything literally turned upside down.”

He said he and his family are “not satisfied” with the answers they’ve gotten so far. At this point, he said he would “absolutely not” feel comfortable getting back on the train and would be concerned if his family members did.

The first step, Helmer said, to making the train feel safe again, is increasing transparency and providing clarity about the reasons for the crash, followed by making the necessary changes to improve safety. Helmer and his family are all represented by Richard Pullano, an attorney who filed lawsuits on behalf of all five





Steve Helmer holds his granddaughter Caroline Costello in his daughter's home in Skokie on Nov. 17, the day after the CTA Yellow Line train he was riding crashed into a snowplow. He, his wife, his daughter and two grandkids were injured in the crash. | Pat Nabong/Sun-Times

Wheeler agreed increased transparency from CTA officials is necessary for the service to regain his trust.

“I was surprised it took so long [to reopen], but considering the silence of CTA officials, it should not be all that surprising it took so long, because it seems to me either there’s some incompetency or a possible cover-up,” Wheeler said.

CTA President Dorval Carter said at a Friday news conference that the decision to reopen the Yellow Line was made only when the agency had “absolute confidence” it would be safe. The CTA also assessed all other train lines to ensure none had similar issues.

Many Yellow Line riders **told the Sun-Times Friday they felt comfortable** returning after a shutdown that had frustrated many commuters, giving estimated to last just one week. Shuttle service connected all three stops in the interim, but some riders found it less convenient.

Wheeler said he’s been taking CTA buses instead, and while it does take longer to get where he’s going, he’s not switching back just yet.

“Until I can fully trust CTA again in terms of its transparency and reliability, that will be the route I will take in the foreseeable future,” he said.

---

## Stories like these are funded by you. This Season of Giving, gift knowledge and support your community.

The Chicago Sun-Times is a nonprofit newsroom that relies on member support. Your donation will help keep the news free and accessible for all Chicagoans. Real reporting – digging out the truth, fact checking and gathering context from diverse sources to explain what it really means to you – is expensive. In order to continue providing you with the news Chicago relies on – without a paywall limiting how much people can read without paying, we need you to join us.

Monthly	Annual
\$25.00 /mo	\$15.00 /mo
	\$9.00 /mo

×

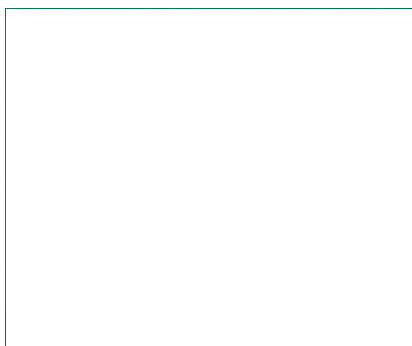
Man critical after shooting inside Bridgeport restaurant

Light snow showers expected through Saturday, significant systems move in Monday

People say they were taken for a ride by alternative energy suppliers. How you can protect yourself.

Donald Trump didn't sign loyalty oath for Illinois ballot that pledges not to 'advocate the overthrow of the government'

Biden warns against Trump return, says 'we nearly lost America' in Capitol attack



---

**MOST READ**

---

Connor Bedard, Nick Foligno both injured by Brendan Smith in heated Blackhawks loss to Devils

---

Donald Trump didn't sign loyalty oath for Illinois ballot that pledges not to 'advocate the overthrow of the government'

---

Woman accused of moving cocaine in Chicago for Mexican traffickers extradited to the United States

---

From new skyscrapers to Union Station redesign plans, 2024 will be a busy year for architecture

---

Actor Christian Oliver, his 2 daughters killed in plane crash in the Caribbean



Sponsored Content

**Round Tulip Marble Dining Table**

Stylish and unique, this dining table has a round Marble Top with 39"..."  
Bed Bath & Beyond

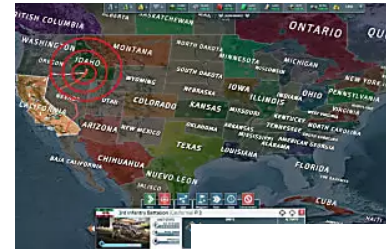
**Framed Art Print | Golfing by From Above**

Give your prints the finishing touch. Our framed art prints are available i...  
Society6



**New Senior Apartments Coming to Cicero (Take A loo...**

StartSearch | Search Ads



**What if Illinois independent o**

Politics Simulation C

---

**HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL**

**Undefeated Maine South show resolve as they outlast Stevenson in win at the Grow the Game Showcase**

Maine South (19-0) has made it to January with an unbeaten record. There have been some close calls—a one-point win over Kenwood on Dec. 8 is the closest the Hawks have been to losing—but they have emerged unscathed so far.

By Kyle Williams | Jan 6, 2024, 4:19pm CST

---

**BEARS**

**Bears put C Lucas Patrick on injured reserve**

Patrick was put on injured reserve Saturday with a calf injury that limited him in Friday's practice.

By Patrick Finley | Jan 6, 2024, 3:19pm CST

---

**BUSINESS**

**FAA grounds Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners after plane suffers a blowout**

An Alaska Airlines jetliner blew out a window and a portion of its fuselage shortly after takeoff above Oregon late Friday, creating a gaping hole that forced the pilots to make an emergency landing.

By Associated Press | Jan 6, 2024, 1:30pm CST

---

**BULLS**

**Bulls have 15 more games until the trade deadline and decisions to make**

Zach LaVine's return on Friday was a thumbs up, especially because the two-time All-Star looked bought into a style of play that was on display in his absence. The best thing LaVine can do now is keep that up as the Feb. 8 trade deadline nears.

By Joe Cowley | Jan 6, 2024, 12:24pm CST

---

**HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL**

**Saturday's high school basketball scores**

All the results from around the area.

By Michael O'Brien | Jan 6, 2024, 12:20pm CST

---

\*

