

CTA offers e-mail alerts to riders

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Starting today, CTA riders will be able to sign up for e-mails from the transit agency to let them know about construction and service changes.

The service is one of a host of improvements the transit agency is making to customer communications, bringing more information to riders before they leave home, on trains and buses and during emergencies, according to CTA President Ron Huberman.

“Over the last year, it’s become very clear to all of us at the CTA that we needed to come up with a very holistic plan to change how we communicate with our customers,” said Huberman.

Poor communications caused major problems last spring, when a CTA Blue Line train stalled underground. Customers complained they didn’t get good information throughout the ordeal, which caused passengers to exit trains without waiting for instructions.

Customers’ need for information also has increased this year because of ongoing construction projects, which have closed some stations on weekends.

The CTA plans to revamp its Web site to make it easier to navigate, expand the “bus tracker” program to more routes so customers can find out when their bus is coming using a computer or BlackBerry, and put up digital display panels on train platforms so riders can see when trains are coming.

The first of those display panels, which already have been announced, will arrive this fall, and the rest will go up next year, Huberman said.

Early next year, the CTA plans to launch an Emergency Alerts program, so customers can sign up to receive e-mail regarding major delays to service along their selected routes. So, if there is a delay on the Blue Line because of a derailment, a Blue Line customer can get an e-mail alert.

Huberman said the changes are being handled internally and will not result in any budget increase.

To sign up for customer service alerts, riders can register at Transitchicago.com.