

# No second depot for Geneva

By Steve Freeman  
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GENEVA — The busiest end-of-the-line station in the Metra commuter rail system will stay that way — at least for a while.

Although Geneva and Metra officials agree a second station is needed, train passengers in the Tri-Cities must continue to put up with parking congestion and crowds at the Geneva station for at least another two years.

Metra has no definite plans for after that time, but one spokesman said suburban stations will be a priority — and officials are aware that Geneva serves commuters from much of Kane County.

Geneva ranks first among "satellite" or end-of-the-line stations in the number of weekday riders (more than 1,000 a day as of 1985). Aurora is second with 900 daily riders and Elgin fourth, with 500.

Adding a second station has been on the minds of Geneva officials off-and-on for nearly 10 years, mainly because of parking problems. The city now owns seven lots, with a total of 567 paid parking spaces, near the depot. The lots, including two overflow lots, are filled by 8 a.m. on weekdays.

Ten years ago the station had about 1,100 riders daily. That

dropped off, according to a 1983 study, because of higher fares and marketing to lure passengers from Geneva to other stations.

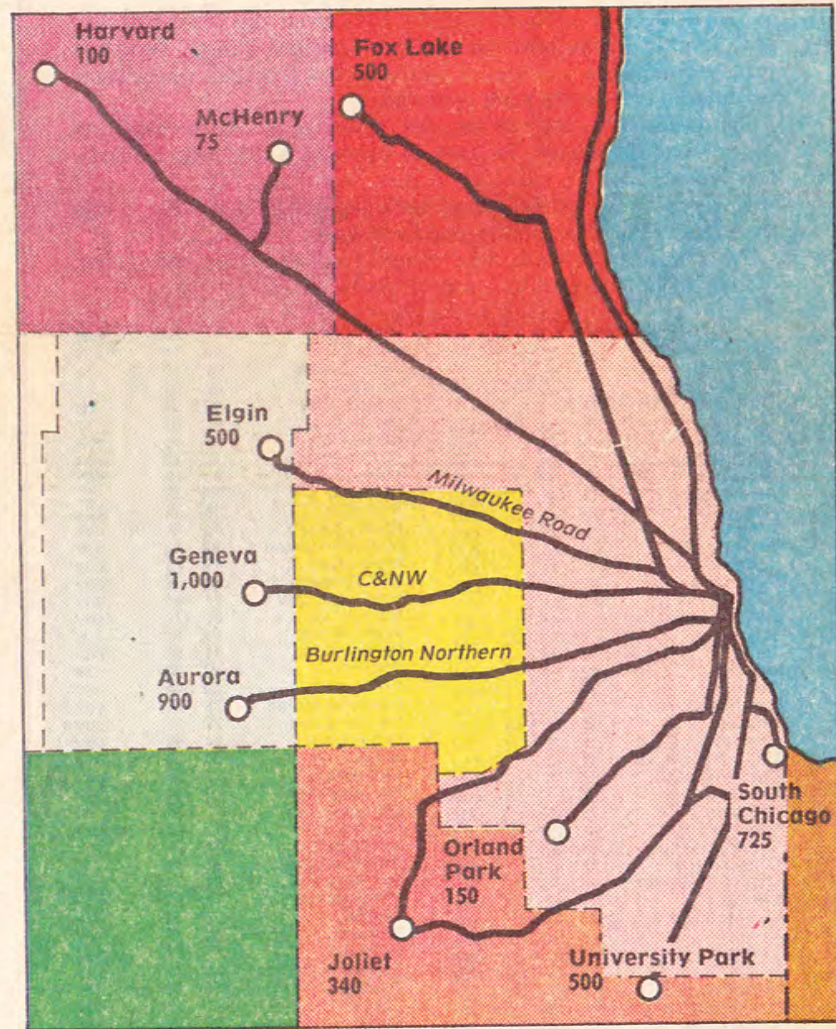
Now, Mayor Richard Lewis said he has renewed the call for a second station. He has met with Metra officials and requested a feasibility study be done.

"If we're to survive as a regional hub of Chicago & North Western (the rail system tied in with Metra), they have to recognize we're a growing area and have a large constituency," Lewis said.

After meeting with Metra officials recently, Lewis paraphrased his request to them: "Take a cornfield and build a station."

Metra spokesman Chris Knapton said a new parking lot could ease the Geneva situation as well as a new station could. Metra and Geneva see eye-to-eye, however, about the need for some sort of a solution, he said.

Lewis said a 95-space parking lot now being planned for west of the C&NW station will ease the problem but not solve it. He said even that lot, which Metra is funding at a cost of \$300,000, is



Map shows number of passengers daily for Metra end-of-line stations, based on 1985 figures. Naperville is busiest en-route station, with 3,600 riders.

# Depot \_\_\_\_\_ from A1 \_\_\_\_\_

in jeopardy because of grading problems.

The last time parking spaces were added for commuters was in December 1986, when 28 spaces were created.

Whatever Metra does, its move will come only after a comprehensive study to be started in 1988 and finished a year later.

Any funding for a new station or expansion would not come until 1989. Knapton said even then the emphasis may be on constructing circumferential lines connecting different suburbs.

Knapton said Metra realizes that the growth in the suburbs and the number of jobs being generated is so phenomenal that Metra can foresee running passenger lines north and south and not into Chicago. He said in the next five to 20 years, either a trolley car system could run or more commuter trains could be built for one of two railroad lines: the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern or

Indiana Harbor Belt for suburbs closer to Chicago.

If the decision is to build a second station in Geneva, Knapton said it could be located on either the east or west side of town.

Lewis said the east location is not as advantageous because of its close proximity to the West Chicago station. He favors the west side because of the availability of land, specifically along Keslinger or Kanelville roads, west of Randall Road.

Knapton said Metra might favor the east side because there is a train storage lot in West Chicago. The disadvantage to a west side location is that C&NW uses the track further west of Geneva for fast-moving freight trains.

Both Metra and city officials agree the agency not yet in the picture is C&NW, which could have a different agenda altogether.

Knapton said, citing the city of Elgin, that it is not unusual for cit-

ies to have two stations.

One possibility is building a second station along the lines of the design used when the Geneva depot, at Third Street and Crescent Place, was remodeled in 1985. That station is called a "condominium" and includes rented space for retail stores, including a bakery, video store and ice cream parlor.

The 1985 Metra study, the latest such report, said the majority of Geneva's passengers come from north and west of the city.

Busy satellite stations ranking behind Geneva are Aurora, second with 900 daily passengers; South Chicago, third with 725; and Elgin, in a tie with University Park for fourth with 500 passengers each.

Compared to all 213 suburban stations in the Metra system, Geneva ranks 40th in the number of passengers.

Naperville, which is on the Burlington Northern line that ends in Aurora, tops all stations in the system with 3,600 daily riders.