

Media release

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APTA EXPO: Stadler and Metra Present the Zero Emission Battery-Electric FLIRT Train at APTA EXPO 2026

Stadler and Metra presented the first battery-electric FLIRT train developed for the US market at APTA EXPO 2026. This technology marks a significant milestone in the evolution of sustainable zero emission passenger rail in North America. "This is about helping shape the future of transportation in North America" said Martin Ritter, CEO of Stadler North America.

Built for Metra, Chicago's commuter rail operator, the battery-electric FLIRT presented today represents a new generation of zero-emission rail technology. It is designed to help transit agencies modernize service without the need for full corridor electrification. Metra ordered eight battery-electric trainsets as part of its commitment to cleaner, more efficient, and more flexible passenger transportation solutions. The new battery trains are expected to enter passenger service by 2028.

"This project is about more than a new train. It is about demonstrating what is possible when agencies and manufacturers work together with a shared vision. It is about bringing proven technology to new markets. And it is about helping shape the future of transportation in North America," said Martin Ritter, CEO of Stadler North America

The battery FLIRT is based on Stadler's proven FLIRT platform and utilizes onboard lithium-ion batteries to allow operation on non-electrified rail corridors while producing zero local emissions. The train can recharge using existing 480V cabling in yards and terminals, through dedicated charging infrastructure, and by recovering energy through regenerative braking. This flexibility enables rail operators to deploy electric service on routes where traditional electrification may not be economically feasible.

“This purchase demonstrates Metra’s commitment to cleaner power, to quieter trains, and to thinking outside the box as we plan for our future,” said Metra Executive Director/CEO Jim Derwinski. “We are excited to bring this technology, and its efficiency, flexibility, and reliability, to Chicago and to our riders.”

“These new trainsets are coming at a perfect time,” said Northern Illinois Transit Authority Chairman Tom Kotarac. “As NITA begins its work to create a more cohesive and useful public transportation system in northeast Illinois, we are excited about the potential for these new trainsets to help increase service and improve regional connectivity, while at the same time reducing regional pollution and noise.”

Battery-electric rail technology is already delivering results in Europe. Stadler's FLIRT Akku trains entered passenger service in Germany in 2023, where they operate on partially electrified regional networks and replace diesel-powered services. The deployment has demonstrated how battery trains can support decarbonization goals while maintaining reliable passenger operations.

Battery trains reduce emissions and lower noise levels

For U.S. transit agencies, battery trains offer a compelling option to reduce emissions, lower noise levels, and improve service flexibility without requiring extensive infrastructure investments. Modern multiple unit train sets also provide operational benefits, such as faster acceleration, improved energy efficiency and an enhanced passenger experience.

At this week’s APTA EXPO 2026 in Chicago, trade show attendees have the unique opportunity to view the vehicle up close and learn more about Stadler's portfolio of alternative propulsion technologies, including battery and hydrogen-powered rail solutions.

About Metra

Metra is an essential resource that safely and reliably connects individuals to the things that matter most in their lives — their work, their homes and their families.

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About the Northern Illinois Transit Authority

The Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA), formerly the Regional Transportation Authority, was created by the Illinois General Assembly and Governor JB Pritzker to make transit across northeastern Illinois work for riders as one regional transit system. NITA sets regional fares, service standards, and schedules across CTA, Metra and Pace; plans and funds transit investment; and oversees system performance and finances. Across its six-county region, the transit system provides more than 1.3 million rides a day.

Learn more at nita.illinois.gov

About Stadler

Stadler has been building trains for over 80 years. The provider of mobility solutions in rail vehicle construction, service and signalling technology has its headquarters in Bussnang in eastern Switzerland. Over 17,500 employees work at 8 production and 6 engineering sites and over 80 service locations, including around 6,000 in Switzerland. Stadler is the world's leading manufacturer of vehicles with alternative drive systems (hydrogen and battery) and rack railway vehicles. The company is aware of its social responsibility for sustainable mobility and therefore stands for innovative, sustainable and durable quality products.

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