

## Legislature seeks CTA solutions

### Plan would transfer \$360 million from capital funding to operations

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The chairman of the state Senate Transportation Committee has met with representatives from both parties to discuss a solution to the CTA funding crisis that would convert \$360 million in capital funding into operations funding over two years.

State Sen. Martin Sandoval (D-Chicago) said using capital money to fix the CTA's budget may not be the "public policy of choice," but "extraordinary times call for extraordinary solutions." He acknowledged that the proposal, which would provide \$180 million each year for 2010 and 2011, faces an "uphill climb" in the Legislature.

"I'm pushing really hard for the CTA not to have to increase fares, do layoffs or cut service," Sandoval said. He said cutting transit service and raising fares create a particular burden for poor and minority communities.

The CTA has a \$300 million budget deficit for 2010, due to lower sales tax and property transfer tax revenues. It has proposed making up almost \$180 million of the deficit through service cuts and fare hikes that would raise L fares to \$3. Monthly passes would rise to \$110 from \$86.

The CTA has asked to use funding from the "mini" capital bill, intended for repairs and new equipment, for operations. It also is seeking concessions from its unions.

Steve Brown, spokesman for House Speaker Michael Madigan, said the funding issue is "complicated" and that discussion is "still evolving." The Legislature reconvenes Wednesday.

Legislators are also considering changing the senior free-ride program so that only low-income seniors ride free, while others go back to paying a reduced fare. The CTA figures that the free ride program, tacked on at the last minute to the 2008 transit bailout bill, will cost it \$60 million in 2010.