

# AIMEE LEHTO SCHEWE

.....  
*Writer/ Creative Director from the ad world. Big truth seeker. Strategist at heart.*

# OK, WHAT AM I LOOKING AT?

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This is my (Aimee's) coursework from Ideo U's Insights for Innovation class. It's six assignments that went through the process of field research and insight development with the goal of developing actionable insights that could help improve Metra for regular riders.

This is not one continuous presentation. Each section is the homework for an assignment, so they had different types of deliverables. It was more about going through the process than crafting one continuous story.

But this should show that I've been through an Ideo Insights process, and give you a taste of how I think, work, and write. (Please don't judge the design. It was quick.)

As you'll see from the assignments, I had some assumptions going in (that courtesy would be the big issue), but had some AHA moments during the field research, and learned that unpredictability was a bigger, more relevant, and more solvable problem.

# BACK UP, WHO'S AIMEE?

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[WithTwoEEs.com](http://WithTwoEEs.com)

[BSandRS.com](http://BSandRS.com)

[Pretty-Sweaty.com](http://Pretty-Sweaty.com)

-16 year veteran Writer/Creative Director from the ad world, mostly San Francisco.

-Often mistaken for Muhammad Ali. (Wrote the Impossible is Nothing manifesto.)

-Has a greeting card company and a fitness fashion blog.

-Loves psychology, sociology, and finding the big truth behind any problem or situation.

-Lots of advertising/ branding/ copywriting experience, also naming, press releases, etc. but also loves insight hunting, crafting and strategy.

-Loves making things work better and make more sense.

# ASSIGNMENT ONE:

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*Observation*



# 500 HOURS A YEAR

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*seeking truths about the METRA commute*



# OBSERVATION PLAN

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WHO?

*professional suburban rail commuters*

WHERE ONLINE?

*METRA forums, twitter, look for hashtags*

WHERE IRL?

*local train station, on the train, city train station*

*talking to neighbors who commute, looking at their work bags and routines*

THINGS TO WATCH FOR

*pain points: hassles, lack of information, anywhere where someone might swear*

*adaptations, patterns, things that stick out as odd, behavior prompts*

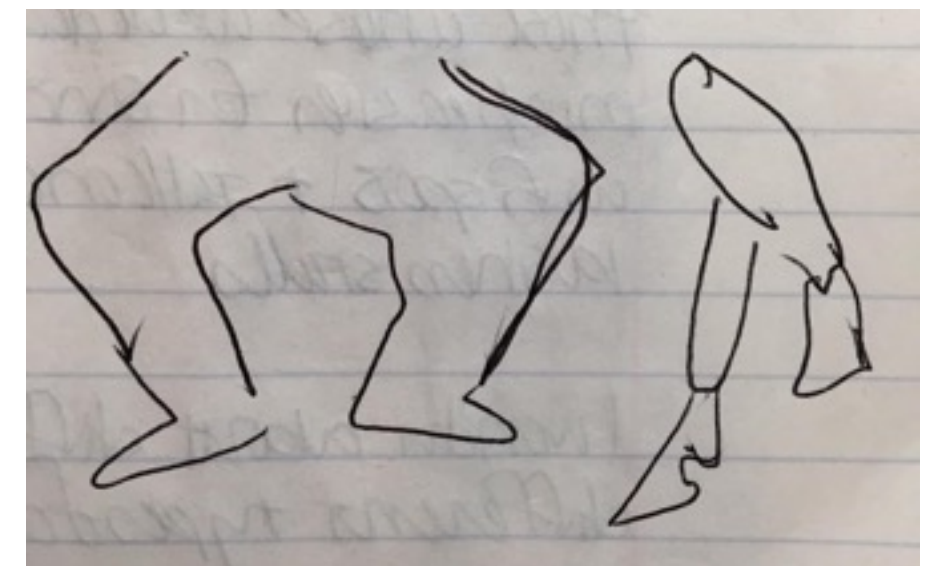
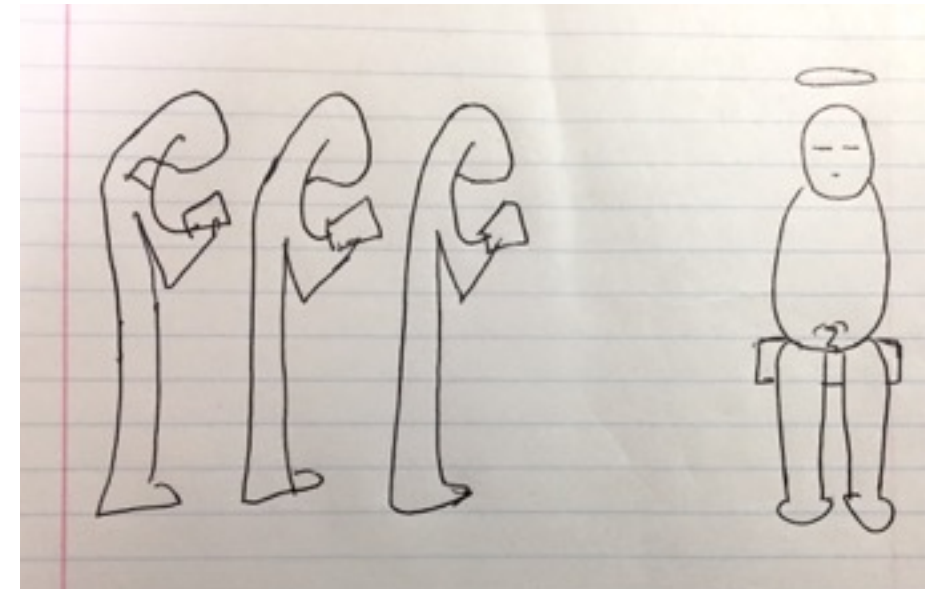
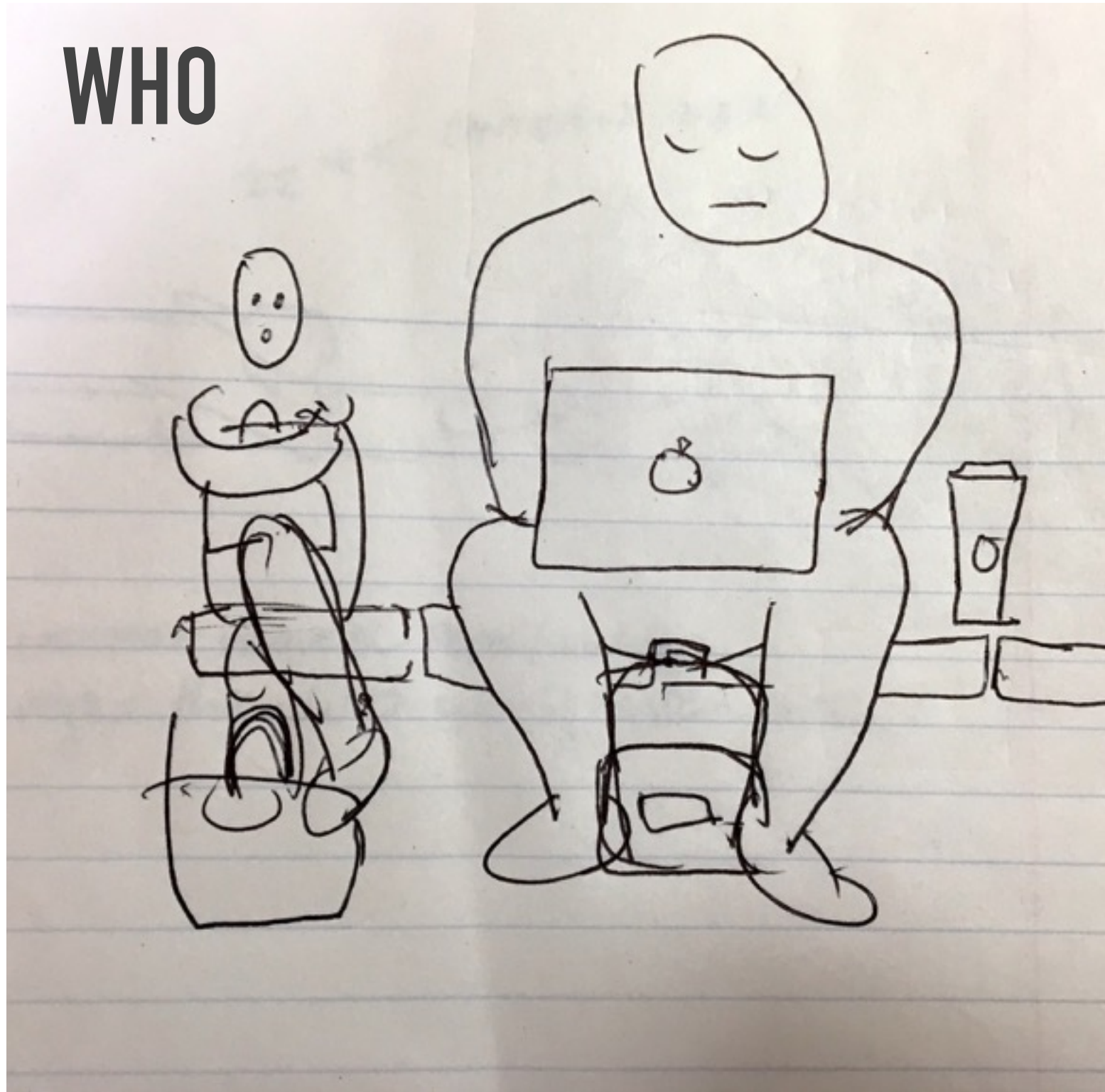


*The 7:34 am train into Chicago and Twitter.*





# WHO



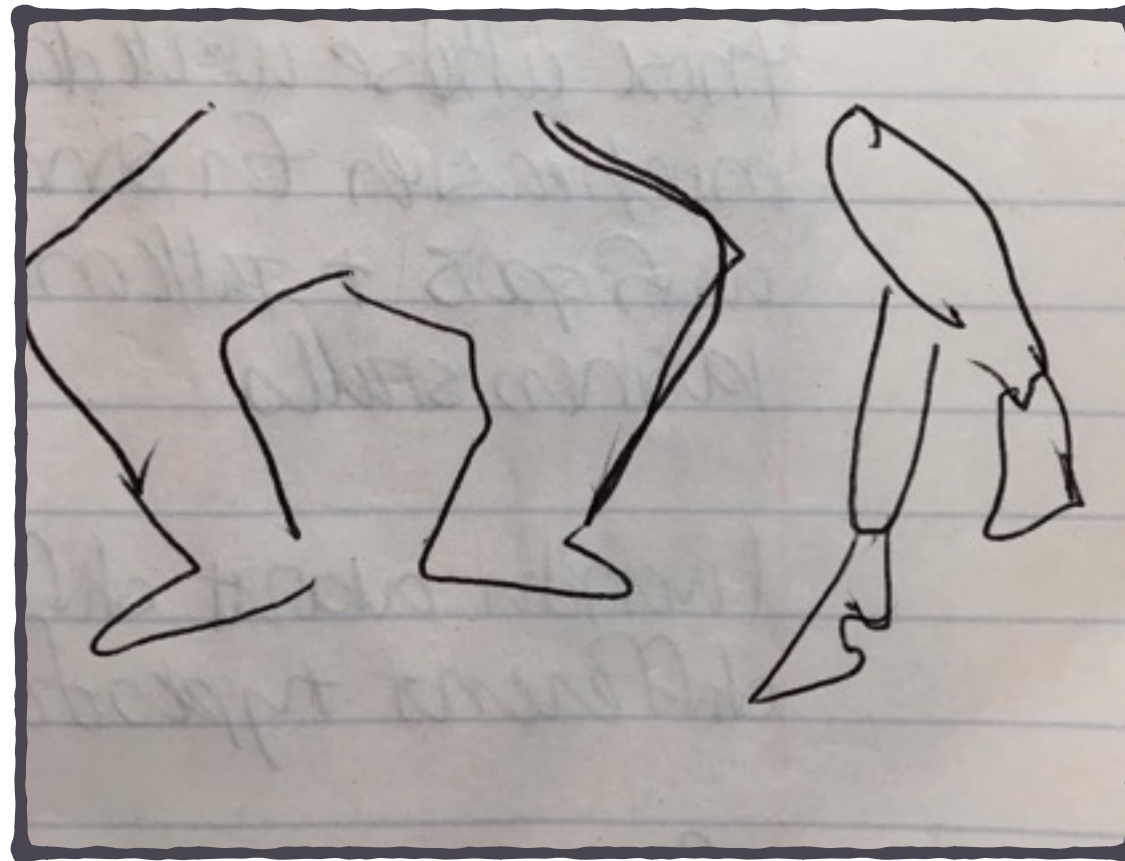
*I observed my whole train car, rather than just staring a few specific people.*

*But what's interesting is: they merged into a few specific types of people.*



# WHO RIDES THE TRAIN?

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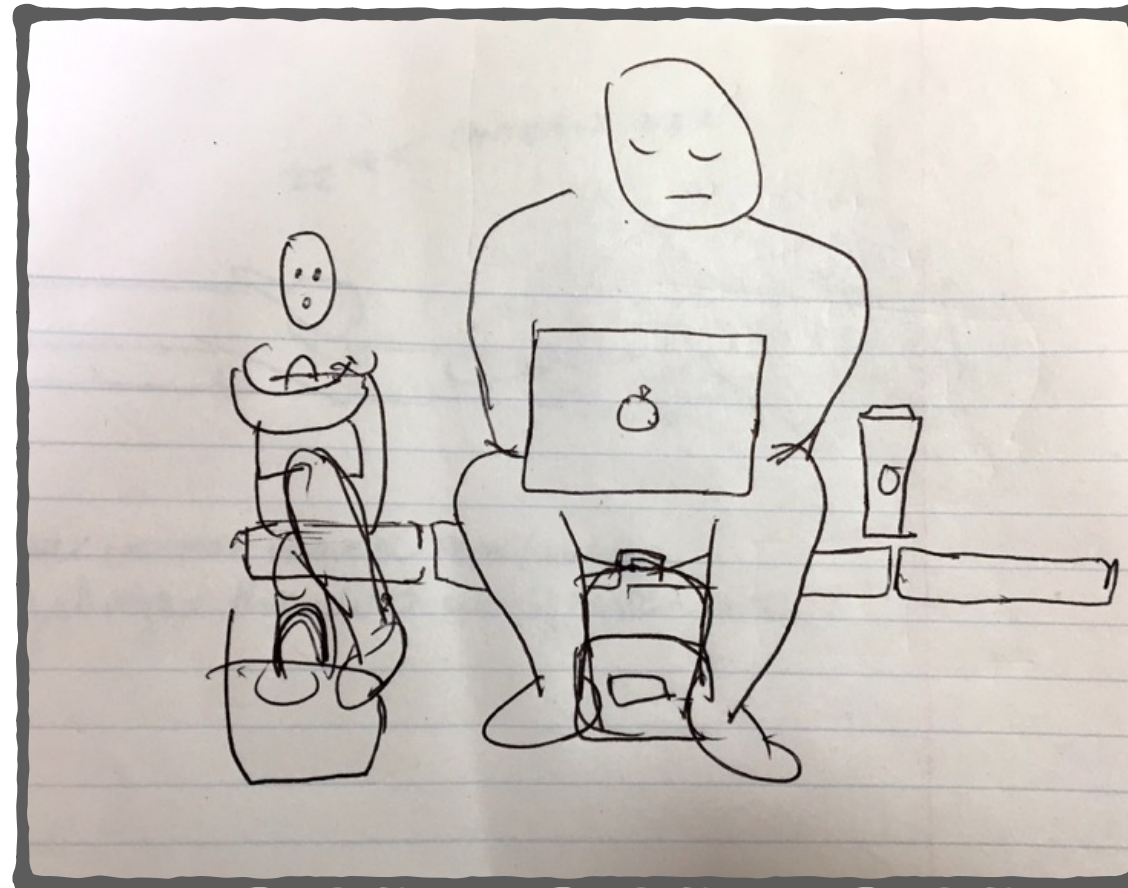
## MEN & WOMEN

- took up space
- carried one bag if any
- come as you are

- made themselves small
- carried multiple bags
- transformers

# WHO RIDES THE TRAIN?

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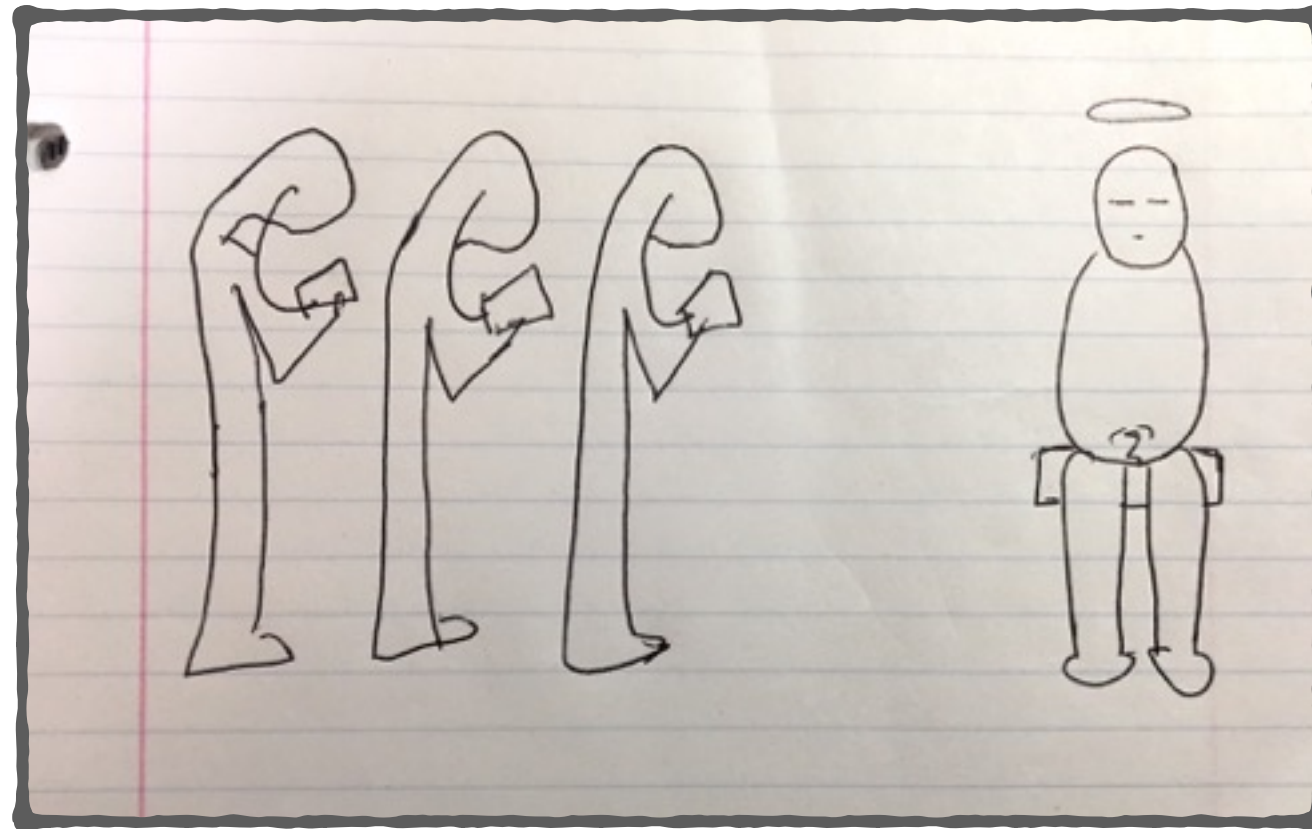
## TOURISTS & PROS

- heading in for culture or sports
- much less train savvy
- having a journey

- heading to work, often working
- very savvy, automatic
- train=part of work

# WHO RIDES THE TRAIN?

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## PHONEHEADS & MONKS

- watching, reading, emailing, texting

- avoiding eye and physical contact

- escaping here, and own head

- no distractions

- comfortable with any amt. of space

- present or meditative



# HIGHLIGHTS

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WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

*There are rules. There are courtesies.*

BUT NONE OF US WANT TO BE HERE. (EXCEPT THE TOURISTS.)

*This is something we have to do, not want to do.*

WE ALL MAKE IT WORK.

*In our own ways.*

THE TRAIN CAN BE A PAIN.

*There are things that are out of our control. Like backups and outages.*

BUT PEOPLE ARE THE WORST.

*The most important thing is to not make it worse for others.*

# CONCLUSIONS

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**Train problems**, like delays and overcrowding, annoy riders, but they are out of their control. So they suck it up and deal.

**People problems** are under someone's control, and therefore riders allow themselves to be mad about them. (Complain and call out on twitter.)

**The most important thing  
is to not make the ride worse for others.**

# CONCLUSIONS

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While there are **hashtags** to use, and there was a small “METRA manners” **poster campaign** that ran in the trains, **there’s a gap in effectiveness**. Why?

-> Tweeting about rude riders doesn’t change rude riders, because they are not self-aware. And tweeting is preaching to the choir, it’s not communicating with those who need the information.

-> Posters help educate. But social pressure is probably the most powerful behavior changer.

-> *BUT this is the Midwest. People value politeness highly, and are extremely uncomfortable with confrontation.*



# CONCLUSIONS

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## WHAT'S MISSING

IS A WAY FOR RIDERS TO FEEL EMPOWERED  
TO PRESSURE OTHERS TO DO THE RIGHT THING,  
WHILE FEELING ASSURED  
THAT THEY WON'T CAUSE A FIGHT.

# ASSIGNMENT 2

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*Brainstorm a list of extreme users.*



# EXTREME(ISH) COMMUTERS

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*Looking to the fringes to improve METRA for most.*



# LENSES AND EXTREMES

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AGE	30	60
JOB	HOMELESS	CEO
GENDER	MALE	FEMALE
RIDE STYLE	DOING NOTHING	DOING EVERYTHING
ATTITUDE	THIS IS AWFUL	THIS IS FUN
GEAR	PAPER	DIGITAL
BEHAVIOR	INVISIBLE	RIDE WRECKER
CARRY-ONS	A WALLET	A SUITCASE
ACTIVITY	SLEEPING	RUNNING A COMPANY

# WHO ARE THE EXTREME USERS?

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*Within the majority of users (workers commuting), there are two extremes:*

**TRAIN = EXTENSION OF HOME**



**TRAIN = EXTENSION OF WORK**



# ASSIGNMENT 3

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*Interview*





# GETTING TO KNOW YOU

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*A chat with a METRA commuter*



# STEP 1: QUESTIONS (FOR HER) + CUES (FOR ME)

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**WHAT MATTERS  
TO HER?**

**FOLLOW WHAT  
MATTERS.**

Tell me about your job / family.

What's the best thing that happened last week?

What excites you about your day?

Tell me about how you get to work.

Show me your work bag / routine.

Show me how you spend your ride.

Tell me about your last commute.

If you never had to commute again, what would you miss about METRA?

Not miss?

What was the best ride you ever had?

(look for gaps between say and do/show)

**WARM. OPEN.  
FULL ATTENTION.**



## STEP 2: WHO I INTERVIEWED

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Meet Caryn N.

She works at in sales at Careerbuilder out of Chicago.

She takes the train 1-2 times a week,

works from home

and travels to meet with clients.

Mother of two.

Lives 26 miles from Chicago.

## STEP 2: WHO I INTERVIEWED

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This is her home office. It's also where she keeps her work bags and all of the paraphernalia she needs to carry with her when she travels for work or goes into the office.

There's an equal amount of family and work stuff. It's a good representation of what gets her attention and it also shows how dedicated she is to both.



## STEP 2: SOME HIGHLIGHTS

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### FEELINGS

Running late, scrambling.

Constantly adjusting to things that pop up that are out of her control.

### THEMES AND PHRASES

Trying to plan. Always on the go. Flexibility. Being prepared.

Responding to clients. Communicating with husband and caretakers.

### GOING TO EXTREMES

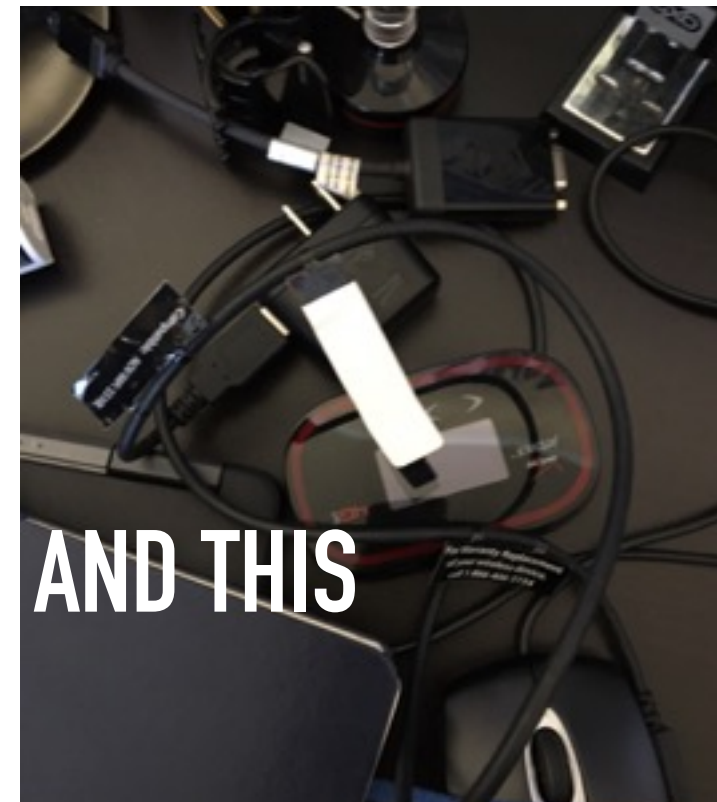
Because the trains are infrequent mid-day, she sometimes takes an Uber home (hour drive) and runs meetings in the car.

### WHAT MATTERS TO HER?

She's thankful that she has the flexibility to work on the go so she can to take care of things at home. But she takes great care to keep this invisible to her clients. Not in a deceptive way, but she sets herself up so she can take calls without background noise, and in a place where she can fully access her work servers and systems. Her office exists not in Chicago, for the most part, but on her lap, in her hand, and on her back.

## STEP 2: WHAT I NOTICED ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES

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BUT THAT'S JUST  
THE WORK STUFF

(ADAPTATION)

## STEP 2: WHAT IT TAKES

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ALL THAT  
WORK STUFF



CHANGE OF  
SHOES  
UMBRELLA  
MAKEUP  
SNACKS



SHE USED TO  
CARRY A  
BREAST PUMP  
AND BOTTLES  
AND A FREEZER  
BAG FOR THE  
MILK (!!)

## STEP 2: WHAT IT TAKES

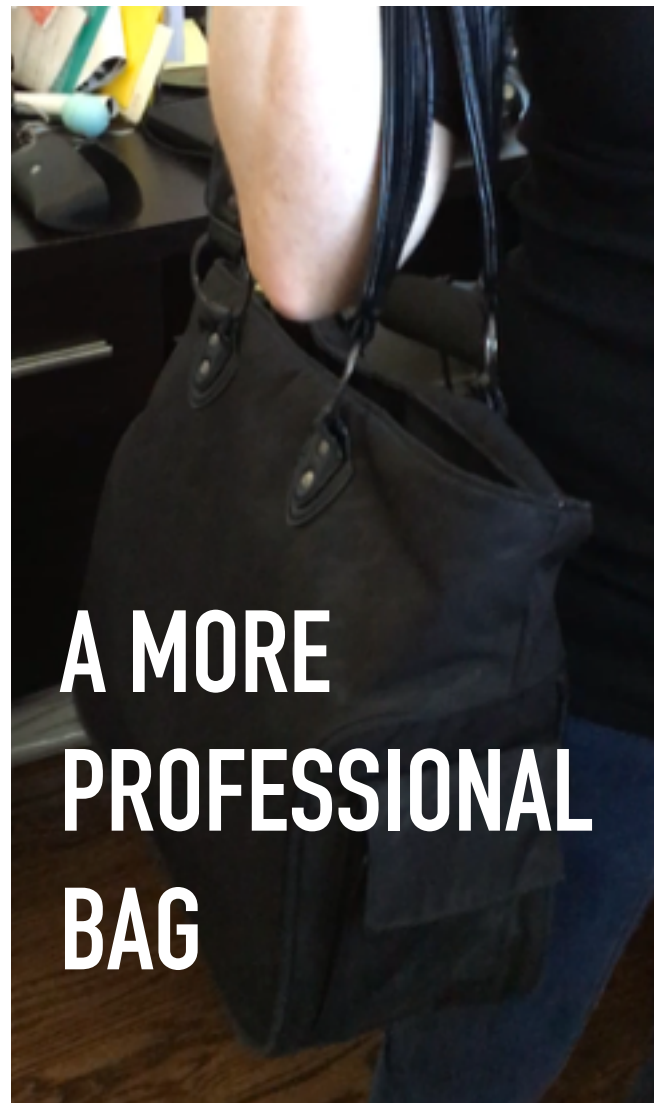
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**A GIANT  
BACKPACK**

FOR ALL THE WORK  
STUFF AND FOOD,  
SHOES, UMBRELLA, ETC.

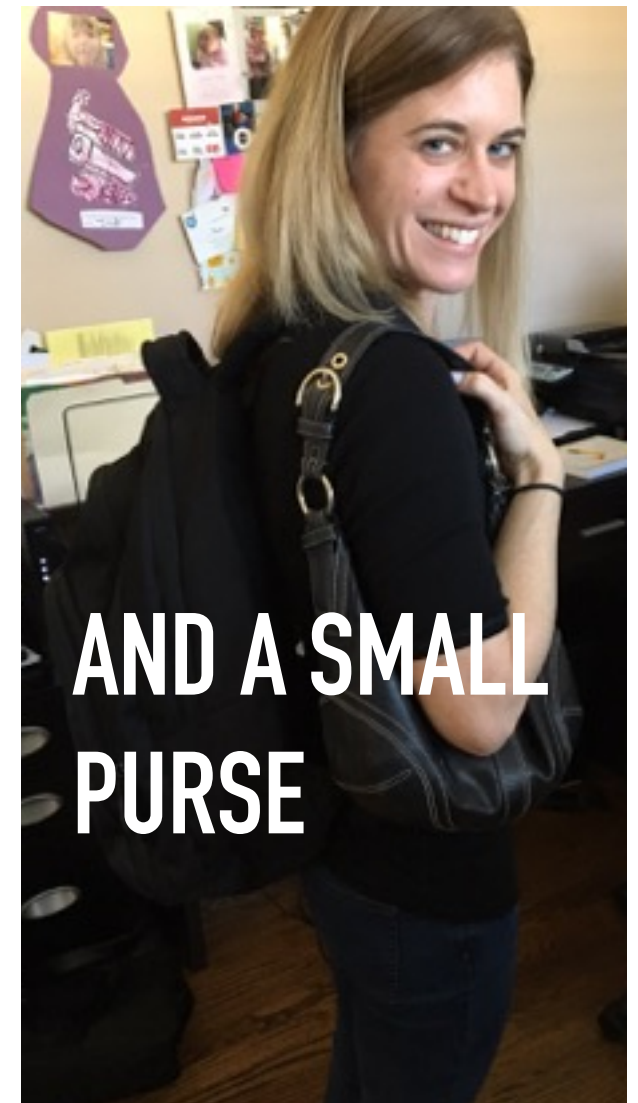
+



**A MORE  
PROFESSIONAL  
BAG**

FOR MEETINGS,  
BECAUSE BACKPACKS  
DON'T FEEL  
PROFESSIONAL.

+



**AND A SMALL  
PURSE**

FOR WALLET, PHONE,  
ETC. FOR MOBILITY AND  
TO KEEP FROM GETTING  
PICK-POCKETED.



## STEP 2: WHAT IT TAKES

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DID I MENTION SHE'S ONLY 5'3"?

THAT'S A LOT TO HAUL.



(WITH A SMILE)

## STEP 2: ONE THING I LEARNED

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**BEING  
PROFESSIONAL**

**BEING  
ADAPTIVE**

**IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TRAIN.  
OR WORKING ON THE TRIAN.**

**IT'S ABOUT WORKING  
EVERYWHERE AT ANY TIME.**

**THE TRAIN IS JUST ONE  
PLACE WHERE THAT  
HAPPENS.**

# ASSIGNMENT 4

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*Empathy immersion*





# ARE WE GONNA MAKE IT?

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*Metra Commuter Empathy Immersion*



# PLAN FOR WHAT YOU WANT TO LEARN

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## WHO DO YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND?

Professional commuters who use Metra regularly.

## WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO...

1. Carry all of those bags / all that gear?
2. Have a business call on the train?
3. Work (online) on the train?
4. Get from your parking lot to the train?
5. Not know if the train is going to be early or late?

# BRAINSTORM IDEAS

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1. Shadow someone else's commute.
2. Conduct a call on the train.
3. Go through the process of setting up a personal hotspot and working on a laptop on the train.
4. Have a phone call and try to hide the fact that I'm on the train from the other person.
5. Try using a different, less convenient parking lot.
6. Have a phone call at the Metra station. Suburban / City.
7. Pull out a laptop and work at the Metra station. Suburban / City.
8. Purposely leave 5 minutes late for the train.
9. Haul a fully-loaded backpack and purse. Take the busiest train.
10. Try to work on train while being man-sized: wear a really bulky coat.

# WHAT I DID

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## CHANGE PERSPECTIVE

Shadowed another commuter on her morning journey.

## LIMIT YOURSELF

We purposely cut it close, time-wise.

## DO IT YOURSELF

I took a call on the train.

# HIGHLIGHTS

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## SCRAMBLE

**The hustle is real.** Being on the train's schedule means that if anything unexpected happens in your morning, it has a snowball effect, and you **WILL** be power-walking or running to the train. **Escalation. Exponential scrambling.**

## SWEAT

**Built-in Workout.** Being a commuting professional involves a cardio workout just to get to work. And some strength training. And it feels gross. You sweat. And you have to constantly deal with layers and weather challenges. And potentially a “hot car” on the train.

## CAN'T WIN

**Closed-door policy.** On the way home, only half of the train was open. Which means when you climb the two flights of stairs to get to the platform, you might be at the wrong end, and have to walk all the way to the other end of the train.

## OUT OF CONTROL

Being really early seems to be the only solution to the hustle and sweat issues. Signage/communication would solve the closed-doors issue. Maybe more real-time **communication**/updates would help create more of a sense of **control**.



# P.S. WORK STUFF

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SHHHH!

There is so much societal pressure to not disturb other riders, that I physically **could not bring myself to make a call on the train**. But fate intervened, and someone called me, so I forced myself to pick up.

INSECURE

The person on the other end needed my social security number, so obviously I didn't feel comfortable giving that aloud. And I didn't feel comfortable emailing or texting it either. An SSN is pretty extreme as far as sensitive information goes, but I imagine people who work on the train worry about **security**. I'd be nervous about getting hacked if I were using my phone as a personal hotspot...

# ASSIGNMENT 5

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*Show your thought process for crafting an insight statement.*



# CRAFTING COMMUTER INSIGHTS

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# THE THINKING

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These themes felt more obvious:

- Commuting is a chore/job.
- People are sometimes not as courteous as they should be on the train.

But learning that control is a key friction point was more of an “aha!” moment, so I worked on that.



And the idea of bringing the bar cart back felt refreshing and charming, so I thought that might be worth pursuing, too.



# CRAFTING PROCESS : “CONTROL” INSIGHT STATEMENT

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## INFORM

Commuters crave more control, or at least a sense of it.  
Commuters crave more control, and a little could go a long way.  
Commuters crave more control and respect.  
Commuters want to be treated more like humans and less like cattle.  
Commuters take Metra because it's the only option, not because it works well or is pleasant.  
Commuters take Metra only because they have to, and if they didn't have to they absolutely would not.  
It sucks being on someone else's schedule.  
Commuters feel like slaves to the Metra schedule. More trains would reduce that feeling.  
What's a conflict? A disconnect? There might not be one. Other than the “mildly thankful but overall dislike the length and schedule” notion.  
Make the train a friend not an enemy.  
**>>>Make it more memorable/ catchy.>>>**

## INSPIRE

Communication is the opportunity. Control is the key.  
A sense of control can build more contentment.  
To love the commute, they need communication.  
Communication is the key to improving the commute.  
Communication is the key to giving riders more control over the commute.  
Communication is the key to making riders feel more in control over their commutes.  
Communication removes chaos and creates a calmer sense of control.  
**Remove chaos. Create control.**  
**Less chaos. More control.**  
Communication quells chaos and creates a sense of control.  
**Communication calms commuters.**  
Chaos + Communication = (a sense of) Control  
Communication up, chaos down.  
Communication turns the commute from chaos to controlled.  
**Communication is the opposite of chaos.**  
**Communication calms the cranky commuter.**  
Communication calms a chaotic commute.

## MEMORABLE

# CRAFTING PROCESS : “BAR CART” INSIGHT STATEMENT

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## INFORM

Treat people like humans and they'll act like humans.

People act how you treat them.

People rise or stoop to the occasion.

**Raise the bar with a bar.**

Treat people like adults and they'll step up.

Treat people like adults and they'll act like grown ups.

**Treat people with class and they'll act accordingly.**

Commuters are people too.

Consider the power of the cocktail cart.

A little charm goes a long way.

**Lubricate humanity.**

Treats turn commuters into people.

Happy hour is a literal thing.

Take happy hour literally.

No, we're serious about happy hour.

Happy Hour could work.

Happy hour is good for business.

Happy Hour is a win win.

**Cocktails might just class up the joint.**

## INSPIRE

Classy environment, classy commuters.

Commuters will rise to the standards set by their environment.

Create the environment befitting of how you want commuters to behave.

Raise the bar and people will meet it.

Elevate the train and commuters will follow suit.

Respect begets respect.

## MEMORABLE

# THE INSIGHT STATEMENTS I LIKE

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Communication cures chaos.

Raise the bar and people will meet it.

# WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO WRITE INSIGHT STATEMENTS

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## WHAT WAS HARD

Making it feel actionable.

## WHAT WAS EASY

Making it catchy.

## WHAT WAS SURPRISING

Informative and actionable are high standards to meet.



# MEANWHILE

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*In between assignment 5 & 6, the Ideo U teaching team highlighted my insights in an email that went out to everyone taking the course.  
(Awww! Thanks, Ideo!)*

# SCREEN GRAB OF THAT EMAIL

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November 28th, 2016



## COMMUNITY INSPIRATION

*Check out stories and reflections from learners working to craft their insights.*

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Aimee's thought process for narrowing in around her challenge of addressing commuter stress:

"Commuting is a chore/job. People are sometimes not as courteous as they should be on the train. But learning that control is a key friction point was more of an "aha!" moment, so I worked on that. And the idea of bringing the bar cart back felt refreshing and charming, so I thought that might be worth pursuing, too."

This led her to the insights: "'Communication cures chaos' and 'Raise the bar and people will meet it.'"

**-Aimee Lehto Schewe**

[Give Aimee some feedback](#)

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# ASSIGNMENT 6

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*Final report / summary*



# INSIGHTS TO IMPROVE METRA

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*a little consideration could go a long way*





# PROJECT CHALLENGE

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## GENERAL

How might we gather inspiration and insights to design a better experience for people on public transportation in your area?

## ABOUT METRA

METRA is the commuter train system that runs from the suburbs into Chicago. 241 stations. 11 rail lines. 89% of riders on my local line take it for work. Statistically, the more trips a rider takes per month, the less satisfied that rider is with the service.

*The more you use it, the less you like it. Yikes.*

## SPECIFIC

How can I gather inspiration and insights to design a better experience for **regular / frequent suburban professional commuters** on Chicago's METRA train lines?

# WHO I LEARNED FROM

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Caryn

- uses METRA 3x/week
- works on the train
- I interviewed and shadowed her



Mike

- Caryn's husband
- also uses METRA
- doesn't work on train



The Public

- all of the people and behaviors I observed during two rush-hour commutes and twitter

# ILLUMINATING QUOTES

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“I could literally drive to Milwaukee to see a client in the same amount of time it takes me to get downtown.”

“My bag feels heavy already.”

“...And where is the money for the fare hikes going, anyway? I don’t see any improvements. ”

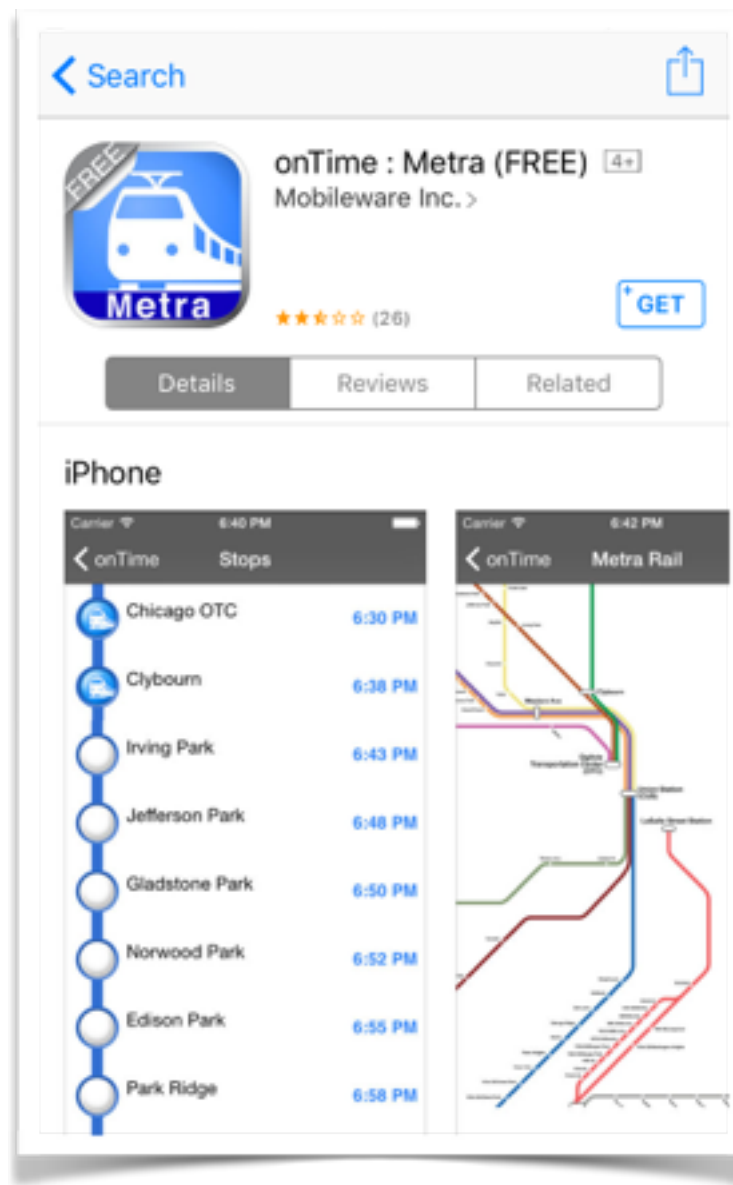
“I don’t trust METRA. The excuses for the delays are obviously fake. The updates aren’t accurate. The trains are late fairly often. And even worse, sometimes they’re early!”

“Bring back the bar cart.”

“You run to the station, you run up that huge flight of stairs, and you could still miss the train because you went up the wrong side and the doors are closed.”



# ILLUMINATING OBSERVATIONS



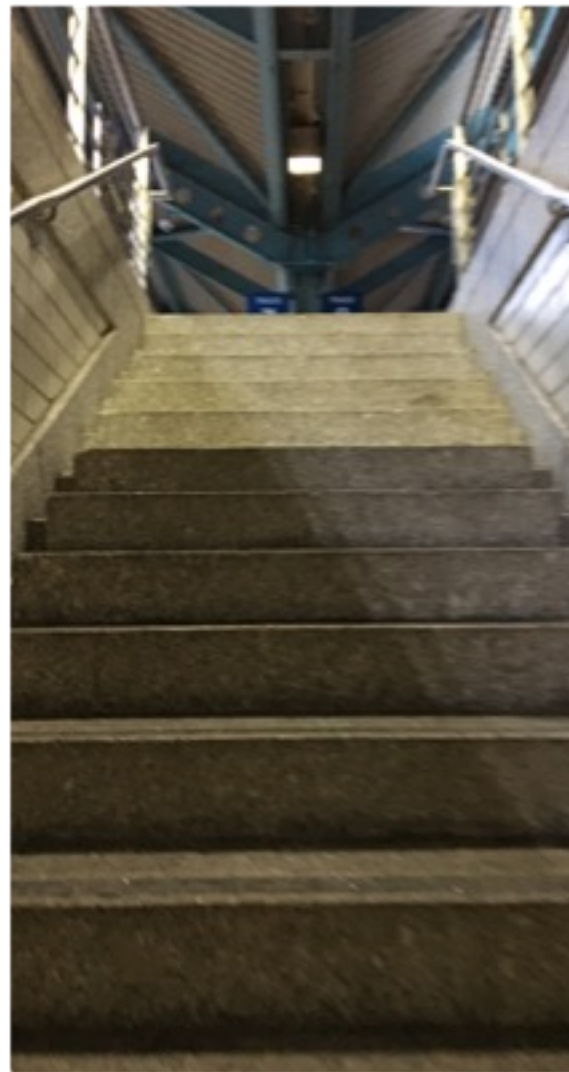
There are a lot of apps for tracking METRA trains, but none of them use real time GPS (like Uber).



# ILLUMINATING OBSERVATIONS

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On the “French Market” side of the station (where most commuters go) there are no clocks, only one board that lists the track numbers for the trains, and no way of knowing which set of stairs will lead to open or closed train cars. (There are two stairways for each train track.)



# INSIGHT + IMPLICATIONS

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## *What did we learn?*

Commuting on METRA is a pain.

Literally, because professionals cover miles on foot to get to the train,  
carrying all but their desks with them.

And figuratively, because commuters are constantly reacting to things that are out of their control.

(...often without information.)

*But the good news is, there's a fairly easy fix.*

# INSIGHT + IMPLICATIONS

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*The actionable insight:*

Communication cures chaos.

- > Add GPS tracking to the VENTRA app so commuters can see their approaching train in real time and adjust accordingly.
- > Only post train info on the board next to the stairways that lead to the open sections of the trains in French Market part of station. If the board is dark, you know to go to the other stairway.
- > Install three clocks in French Market part of station. One at each end, one in the middle.
- > Add another train board at east end. Move current one from center to west end so riders can glance at it when they walk in instead of having to walk to the middle of the station.
- > Consider using PR/ small ads on the VENTRA app to share exactly where the raised fare money is going. Even if it doesn't go where a rider would prefer it to go, they can at least appreciate that it is going somewhere of some use.

Even when things are unpredictable, updates give commuters a sense of control, which will make them happier with their METRA experience.

# INSIGHT + IMPLICATIONS

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*And just for fun...*

Raise the bar and people will meet it.

And by that I mean...

“Bring back the bar cart.”

Commuting by METRA is a pain. People feel like cattle. The bar cart made riding the train a treat, and made it more social. People talked to each other. Connections were made. People didn't feel like commuter zombies. They felt like humans. And seeing each other as humans, not “other people on my train,” is a way to get people to be more courteous to each other, which is always a problem on transit.



*Cheers!*