

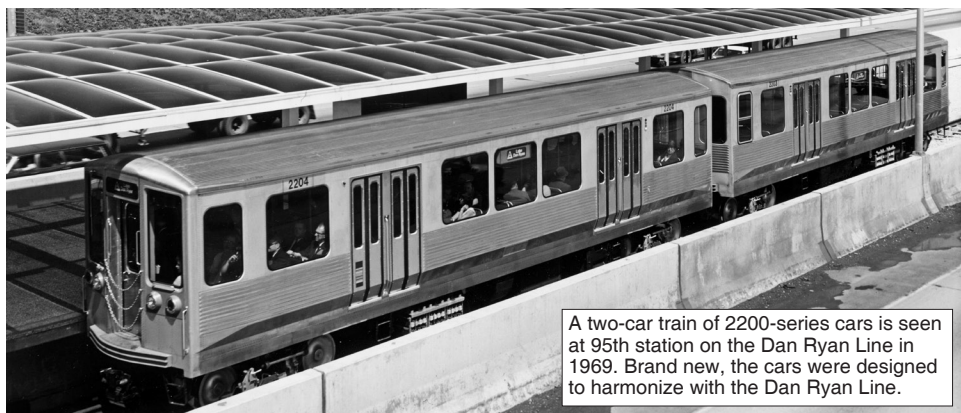
CTA retires the last 2200-series 'L' cars

On August 8, 2013, the Chicago Transit Authority reached a milestone when it retired the last 2200-series 'L' cars that had been in service since 1969-70.

Perhaps best remembered in later years as the last 'L' cars with "blinker" style doors, which pivot inward as they open, the 2200-series cars were ordered as part of two expansion projects undertaken in the late 1960s – the Kennedy Extension and the Dan Ryan Line. The Kennedy-Dan Ryan (KDR) project included the purchase of 150 cars to equip the new lines, designed and built by the Budd Company and funded by the then-new Department of Transportation and by the City of Chicago.

Planned as another generation in the High Performance Family started by the 2000-series cars delivered in 1964, the 150 2200-series cars were designed to have modern aesthetics and features. The designers of the Kennedy and Dan Ryan facilities, famed architects Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, were retained to prepare the aesthetic details of the cars to harmonize with their modernist stations. As a result, the cars had a "boxy" shape that matched the flat, clean lines of the KDR stations and fixtures. The exteriors were unpainted stainless steel instead of the painted aluminum that had been standard in Chicago rapid transit car designs for twenty years, with fluted side panels.

The interiors featured large windows (previous cars had smaller windows with a second row of "standee" windows above), foam-stuffed spring seats upholstered in charcoal gray vinyl, beige window masks and gray wainscot panels, and stainless steel trim and panels throughout the car. An arched roof and the replacement of vertical stanchions with seat-top hand-holds (except next the doors), combined with the large windows, light wall colors, and backlit advertising panels, gave the cars a more open, airy feel than their predecessors. The cars were air conditioned for passenger comfort, only the second series of 'L' cars at the time to have that amenity.



A two-car train of 2200-series cars is seen at 95th station on the Dan Ryan Line in 1969. Brand new, the cars were designed to harmonize with the Dan Ryan Line.



A train of 2200-series cars on a charter trip are rounding the curve at 63rd Street on the Dan Ryan Line on January 4, 1970.

The cars received a mid-life rehabilitation in 1990-92, performed by the New York Rail Car Corporation, to extend their lives. Though the changes to the passenger areas were modest, the cars' motors, trucks, and other systems were completely overhauled. Other changes included adding hopper sashes along the tops of the windows, replacement of the padded seats (by then a target of vandalism) with fiberglass seat frames and inserts, swapping of the backlit ad panels for solid panels and rows of fluorescent lights, and replacement of the wall surfaces with materials that matched the other car series in service at the time.

The 2200-series cars are unusual in that, unlike the railcars of most other series that have moved around to various lines over the course of their service lives, the 2200s have only been assigned to a few routes during their 40-plus year careers. Furthermore, some cars have spent their entire service life on a single route, a very unusual situation for 'L' cars.

The cars were initially assigned to the services the Dan Ryan and Kennedy were through-routed with – the West-South Route (Lake-Dan Ryan) and West-Northwest Route (Milwaukee-Congress-Douglas). On the Lake-Dan Ryan, they were commonly run in mixed consists with the 2000-series cars; on the West-Northwest Route, the 2200s were operated in solid trains, as the other cars assigned to the route – the PCC 6000-series cars – were not compatible. By the summer of 1983, all of the 2200-series cars were assigned to the West-Northwest Route, renamed the Blue Line in 1993. They remained on the Blue Line (and for a period, the Pink Line, which was split off the Blue Line in 2006) for the remainder of their service lives.

With the production delivery of the new 5000-series cars beginning in 2011, the remaining 2200-series cars began to be retired as the CTA continued to modernize its fleet. Over 250 5000-series cars were delivered by August 2013, allowing the last of the 2200-series units to be removed from service.