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CHICAGO NEWS METRO/STATE

CTA has a pigeon problem. Birds get trapped, die on L platforms, woman says

Pigeons have gotten trapped and died at the Clinton station for years. A commuter who has rescued some of the birds launched a petition demanding a permanent solution from the CTA.

By Rafaela Jinich | Feb 26, 2025, 5:30am CDT



Julia Ekiert's online petition urging the Chicago Transit Authority to prevent pigeons from getting trapped and dying at the Clinton L platform



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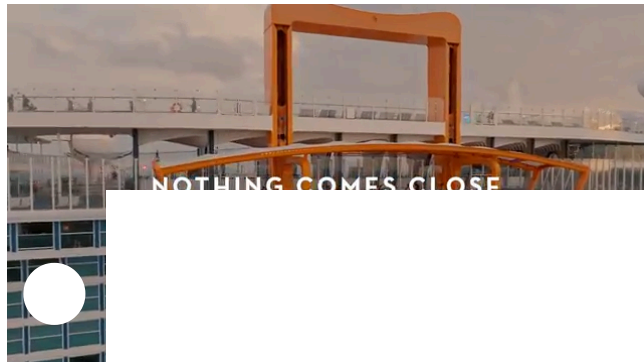


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Hundreds of commuters pass through the Clinton station on the CTA's Green and Pink Lines daily, but it is easy to overlook the small gap by the escalator — until a pigeon flaps helplessly inside.

For Julia Ekiert, that gap isn't just a design flaw — it's a sign of a larger problem, one she hopes to solve with a [Change.org petition](#) that's quickly gained traction.

Ekiert, 25, a doctoral student at the University of Illinois Chicago, launched the petition on Feb. 18 after rescuing a rain-soaked pigeon that died despite her efforts.

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“When these pigeons go unnoticed, they die there,” she said. “I’ve seen carcasses pile up for weeks. It’s disgusting — and it’s a public health risk. Decomposing birds attract rats and spread bacteria.”

Pigeons frequently fly into the escalator tunnel at the Clinton station, become disoriented, and fall into the space between the escalator and the window — where they become trapped. Some survive for days without food or water; others die, their bodies left to decompose in full view of commuters.

The sight of decaying birds highlights what Ekiert calls a “slow response from the Chicago Transit Authority.”

A pigeon trapped in the gap between the escalator and tunnel wall at the Clinton Green and Pink Line station. | Julia Ekiert Provided

“I pulled one out just this morning,” she said on Monday.

On Tuesday, three CTA workers were seen measuring a metal plate to cover the gap between the escalator and the window at the Clinton station. One worker described their task as “taking care of the pigeon problem.”

Ekiert said she hadn’t expected to see workers addressing the issue so soon.

“I was commuting this morning and was genuinely shocked to see workers there,” she said.

Soon after Ekiert created the petition, Ald. Bill Conway’s office, whose 34th Ward includes the Clinton station, said it was calling the CTA to discuss installing netting over the gap.

“Netting isn’t the best solution,” Ekiert said. “Pigeons can get tangled or trapped in it, which just creates another problem.”

Conway’s office also connected Ekiert with a CTA representative, to whom she proposed using foam barriers. The response was noncommittal.

“All they told me was, ‘We’ll see what we can do and pass this along to our facilities department,’” Ekiert said.

That’s the last she heard from the CTA.

Pigeons keep getting stuck at this CTA stop



When contacted by the Chicago Sun-Times on Tuesday, the CTA confirmed it was working on a solution.

“We are in the process of measuring and creating a sheet metal cover for the gap in question to prevent pigeons from gaining access to that space,” CTA spokesperson Manny Gonzalez said in an email. “We will also be installing pucks at the station by the end of this week that emit a scent intended to deter pigeons from gathering at the station.”

Asked if a design feature at the station was contributing to the problem, the CTA did not cite any design-related factors. Instead, they said that pigeons flock to this station because people are known to feed them in an area nearby.

PETA, which contacted Ekiert to gather details and opened a case after sharing videos of her rescues, also heard from the CTA on Tuesday afternoon.

“CTA is working really hard to secure a contract for the station that will address some of the alternatives to netting,” the CTA told PETA in an email.

Ekiert first noticed pigeons getting trapped there two years ago.

“I was on the escalator when a few pigeons flew into the tunnel,” she said. “They became disoriented, hit the walls, and fell into that space where they couldn’t get out.”

Initially unsure how to help, she turned to **Reddit** for advice. To her surprise, one commenter said they’d witnessed pigeons getting stuck there more than a decade ago — proof the issue wasn’t new. Since then, Ekiert has taken matters into her own hands, carrying rubber gloves in her bag and rescuing more than 20 pigeons herself.

The Clinton station isn’t the only place where pigeons are getting trapped. At the Clark and Lake station, netting installed below the ceiling has posed its own problems. On Tuesday, two dead pigeons were in the netting — an issue Ekiert and other advocates worry about with this solution.

A dead pigeon stuck in the netting at Clark and Lake station on Tuesday. | Rafaela Jinich/Sun-Times

Natalie Quist, director at Great Lakes Pigeon Rescue, said pigeon entrapment isn't limited to a single station.

"Transit stations are magnets for pigeons — there's shelter, food, and warmth," Quist said. "But once you know birds are repeatedly getting trapped, you have a responsibility to fix it."

Quist, who has received rescued pigeons from the Clinton station and witnessed similar issues firsthand, said any solution should prevent entrapment without creating new hazards.

"Netting sounds good in theory, but pigeons get caught in it all the time," she said. "We get calls about birds tangled in deteriorating nets. Any solution needs regular maintenance."

Conway underscored the importance of addressing commuter concerns as well as public health.

“A safe and healthy transit system is vital for our city,” Conway told the Chicago Sun-Times in an email. “I’ve urged CTA to take swift action and hope there is a resolution soon for the safety of residents.”

Ekiert’s petition has garnered more than 1,500 signatures.

“People clearly care about this issue,” she said. “I just want the CTA to follow through and make sure no more birds get trapped.”



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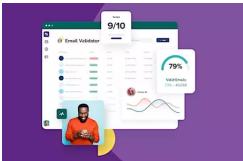
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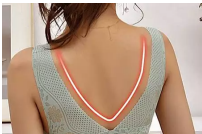
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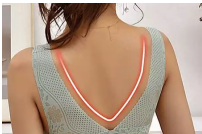
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Gov. JB Pritzker was in Washington Tuesday to address the Center for American Progress, a Democratic-allied think tank, with the conversation

about trying to figure how to resist Trump and Musk as they consolidate power.

By **Lynn Sweet** | Mar 19, 2025, 7:55am CDT

CUBS

Cubs lose 6-3 to Dodgers, are swept in Tokyo Series

The Cubs opened their season with two straight losses to the Dodgers in Japan.

By **Maddie Lee** | Mar 19, 2025, 7:55am CDT

CRIME

Woman who jumped from 3rd floor during South Chicago home invasion dies

Mariah Ivy, 20 and of Steger, died Monday afternoon following the weekend home invasion in the 8000 block of South Manistee Avenue, police said.

By **Sun-Times Wire** | Mar 19, 2025, 7:38am CDT

CRIME

Woman fatally shot during fight on Red Line platform in Greater Grand Crossing

The woman was at the 69th Street station when she was arguing with another woman who fired shots and fled the scene about 9:45 p.m. Tuesday.

By **Sun-Times Wire** | Mar 19, 2025, 6:37am CDT

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Savory olive oil and buttery pistachios bring sophisticated flavors to tangy-sweet lemon bars

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By **Christopher Kimball** | **Milk Street via AP** | Mar 19, 2025, 6:30am CDT



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