

CASE STUDY

DURABOOK HELPS KEEP CHICAGO COMMUTER RAIL SYSTEM ON TRACK

CUSTOMER

Metra

CHALLENGE

With trains running nearly 24/7, Metra digital devices are subjected to intensive environments.

SOLUTION

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ABOUT METRA COMMUTER RAIL SYSTEM

Metra is the commuter rail system serving the Chicago metropolitan area. It operates 242 stations over 11 rail lines. It is the largest and busiest commuter rail system outside of metro New York City and is the fourth busiest commuter rail system in the country by ridership.



The city of Chicago always has been the nation's railroad center and has had commuter trains for almost as long as it has had trains. Rail service peaked in the 1930s when the city had the largest public transportation system in the world.

Commuter rail and other transit modes were originally privately owned and operated, but in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many of these operations were on the verge of failing. Chicago region voters approved a referendum to fund and support the region's public transit system creating the agency that eventually became Metra. The name Metra (short for Metropolitan Rail) was introduced in 1985 to unify a system created from a patchwork of public and private operators. Today, Metra directly operates service on seven lines and pays freight carriers to operate four of its lines. Metra owns the trains, has complete authority over fares, service, and staffing levels, and, in conjunction with local municipalities, is responsible for most stations.

Metra is well attuned to the digital age. Laptops and tablets are used across the organization, ranging from on tracks to diagnostics, wiring diagrams, programming equipment, video camera systems, and more. The devices run specialized web tech software such as MobaXterm and Wynne's DP and require serial and Ethernet port configurations.



S15AB laptop

THE CHALLENGE

Railroading is a testing-intensive environment. With trains running nearly 24/7, Metra digital devices are subjected to heavy vibrations, extreme temperatures, and weather conditions that range from bright sun to rain, snow, ice, wind (it is the Windy city!), and stifling humidity. Despite all of that, it demands devices that hold up and can keep rolling along.

SOLUTION

In 2016, Metra made its first Durabook purchase, the S15AB rugged laptop. Over the intervening years, the units have continually proved themselves and have been very reliable, even with all of the daily abuse they face riding the rails. But, devices eventually wear out, and more advanced devices become available. So when either of those happens, Metra simply places orders for the latest S15AB version.

So what is it about the Durabook S15AB rugged laptop that draws it to Metra's attention?

First, it is incredibly thin, light, and strong. Super lightweight (5.7 lbs.) and ultra-thin (1.2"), it is the thinnest and lightest model in its

class. It also can withstand a 3-foot drop and has IP5X and MIL-STD-810G certifications, assuring it can take a rough day on the job, even being jarred off an engineer's control desk and falling to the floor.

Taking care of Metra's desire for port configurability, the unit offers multiple connection ports, allowing users to connect seamlessly wherever the train takes them. The S15AB comes with an HDMI interface for High Definition digital video and audio output, a VGA port, two USB 3.1 Gen1 type-A, a USB 3.1 Gen2 type-A, a USB 3.1 Gen2 type-C, an RJ-45, and RS-232 ports.

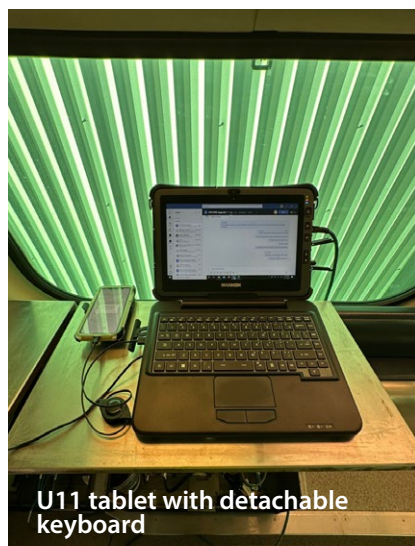
No matter what time of day it is or what the lighting conditions in the cab are, users easily see data at a

glance on the S15AB's 15.6" Full HD (1920x1080) sunlight-readable display. And, in an industry built on mobility, the unit offers exceptional mobility and connectivity with 4G LTE, Bluetooth® V5.0, and Wi-Fi communication for seamless connectivity. In addition, an ergonomic hard handle makes for easy on-the-go use, and an RF hardware switch easily controls communication devices.

THE RESULT

The fact that Metra comes back for additional units or upgrades speaks volumes for its belief in the S15AB. That, coupled with what it refers to as Durabook's super-fast, super-friendly, super-responsive customer service (such as adding backlit keyboards to existing units), helps assure Chicago commuters that the details behind their daily rides are in capable hands.

As for the future, Metra will be expanding its relationship with Durabook by introducing the Durabook U11 fully rugged tablets to key executives and managers. It will also be upgrading select users to the Durabook S14I rugged laptop, engineered to combine military-grade durability, field-worker functionality, computing performance, and long battery life.



U11 tablet with detachable keyboard