

Chicago Marathon, Sun Oct 12, 2025: 16-week plan toward a sub-4:00 (stretch goal)

Built for: 20 km/week over 3 runs, longest run 12 km, 10K in 55:00, 6 h/week cap, weekday sessions before 7 am, Sunday long run, recovering from mild shin splints, treadmill + pool access, travel Aug 4-10. Plan prepared Oct 6, 2026 (sources accessed that date).

Interpretation (read first)

The event date you gave (Oct 12, 2025) is before today (Oct 6, 2026), and Aug 4-10 is a Mon-Sun week only in 2025, so this plan uses the 2025 calendar as written: 16 weeks from Mon Jun 23 to race day. The next edition is Oct 11, 2026 ([official site header](#); 5 days away), too close to train for from here. If you are using this for a later race, keep the week order and shift every date so Week 16 ends on your race Sunday. Injuries: none beyond the mild shin splints; no blocked dates besides the travel week; basic running access plus the treadmill and pool you listed. This is a recommendation, not medical advice.

1. Feasibility and phases

Verdict: stretch, not the base case. Sub-4:00 needs 5:41/km for 42.195 km (240 min / 42.195 km, computed). Riegel's formula ($T2 = T1 \times (D2/D1)^{1.06}$) applied to your 55:00 10K gives 4:13; a 10K of about 52:10 would be needed for exactly 4:00 at that exponent (computed in data/build_plan.py). A secondary source reports Riegel marathon predictions ran at least 10 minutes too fast for half of 2,303 recreational runners and advises exponents of 1.10-1.15 under about 40 km/week of training ([AI Fit Hub](#), accessed Oct 6, 2026); those exponents give 4:28 and 4:48 from your 10K (computed). Your 6-hour cap holds weekly running to a peak of 38 km in this plan, which is low for a 4:00 marathon.

Recommended targets: A = sub-4:00 (only if the Week 10 gate is met); B = 4:05-4:15 (most likely if training goes to plan - this range is my inference, not a published figure); C = finish healthy. Gate: a 10K time trial of 52:30 or faster in Week 10 (Aug 28 +/- 2 days), plus completing the 28 km long run with 8 km at MP in Week 13 with the shins quiet. If the gate is missed, race at 5:55-6:05/km (about 4:10-4:15) and treat sub-4:00 as a later goal.

Phase	Weeks	Dates (2025)	Focus
Base	Wk 1-4	Jun 23 - Jul 20	Rebuild safely from shin splints, add easy volume, strides, pool cross-training.
Build	Wk 5-10	Jul 21 - Aug 31	Threshold, 5K-pace intervals, first marathon-pace (MP) segments. Wk 7 (Aug 4-10) is the travel/recovery week.
Recovery	Wk 4, 7, 11	Jul 14-20; Aug 4-10; Sep 1-7	Reduced load: about -18% to -23% running km vs the prior week.
Peak	Wk 12-13	Sep 8 - Sep 21	Longest runs (24 and 28 km) with MP blocks.
Taper	Wk 14-15	Sep 22 - Oct 5	Running volume about -21% then -42% vs peak, intensity kept.
Race	Wk 16	Oct 6 - Oct 12	Race week; marathon Sunday Oct 12.

2. Week-by-week plan

Hours are computed in code from paces (easy 7:15/km, long run 7:20/km, quality days 6:54/km average incl. warm-up) plus pool/strength minutes; every week is at or under 6.0 h. Weekday sessions are on Tue (easy run), Wed (pool), Thu (run, quality), Fri (short strength/pool), Mon/Sat rest or mobility; Sunday long run. Weekday runs are 4-7 km, so under 50 minutes and doable before 7 am. Week-on-week running-km increases are 11% or less versus the last non-recovery week (computed). Race week hours include a 4:00 race.

Wk	Dates	Phase	Key sessions (intensity)	Hours / km	Notes
1	Jun 23-Jun 29	Base	Sun 10 km easy (7:15-7:45/km, treadmill ok); Thu 4 km easy + 4x20s strides; Wed 45 min pool	2.9 h / 18 km	Shin check: run only if pain is <=2/10 and gone next morning; otherwise swap the run for 40 min pool.
2	Jun 30-Jul 06	Base	Sun 11 km easy; Thu 5 km easy + 6x20s strides; Wed pool 30 + Fri 15 min strength	3.2 h / 20 km	Add 15 min calf/hip strength x2/wk.

Wk	Dates	Phase	Key sessions (intensity)	Hours / km	Notes
3	Jul 07-Jul 13	Base	Sun 12 km easy; Thu 5 km with 4x2 min steady (RPE 6); Wed pool 30 + Fri strength 15	3.4 h / 22 km	Strides and steady blocks only - no hard running yet.
4	Jul 14-Jul 20	Recovery	Sun 10 km easy; Thu 4 km easy; Wed pool 30 + Fri strength 15	2.9 h / 18 km	Recovery week (about -18%).
5	Jul 21-Jul 27	Build	Sun 13 km easy; Thu 2x8 min threshold (5:35-5:45/km) w/ 3 min jog; Wed pool 40 + Fri pool/strength 30	4 h / 24 km	Threshold intro; stop the session if shin pain returns.
6	Jul 28-Aug 03	Build	Sun 15 km easy (practise gel + water); Thu 3x8 min threshold; Wed pool 40 + Fri 30	4.3 h / 26 km	Longest run so far; rehearse breakfast.
7	Aug 04-Aug 10	Recovery	Travel week Aug 4-10: 3 easy runs (hotel treadmill or outdoors: 4 + 5 km midweek, 11 km Sun), no quality; bodyweight strength, pool if available	3.4 h / 20 km	TRAVEL WEEK: reduced load, equipment-light.
8	Aug 11-Aug 17	Build	Sun 16 km easy (last 3 km at 6:15/km); Thu 4x8 min threshold; Wed pool 40 + Fri 30	4.4 h / 27 km	Back from travel; resume normal.
9	Aug 18-Aug 24	Build	Sun 18 km, final 4 km at MP 5:41; Thu 5x1 km @5K pace (5:15) w/ 2 min jog; Wed pool 40 + Fri 30	4.7 h / 29 km	Build; hold paces if shins quiet.
10	Aug 25-Aug 31	Build	Sun 20 km, middle 6 km at MP; Thu 10K time trial (treadmill ok) = GATE test; Wed pool 30 + Fri 30	4.9 h / 32 km	Gate: 10K <= 52:30 keeps sub-4:00 alive.
11	Sep 01-Sep 07	Recovery	Sun 15 km easy; Thu 6 km easy + 6 strides; Wed pool 40 + Fri 30	4.3 h / 26 km	Recovery week.
12	Sep 08-Sep 14	Peak	Sun 24 km incl. 3x5 km at MP (5:41) w/ 1 km easy; Thu 6 km tempo (5:30-5:40); Wed pool 30 + Fri 30	5.2 h / 35 km	Key MP rehearsal in race shoes with race fuel.
13	Sep 15-Sep 21	Peak	Sun 28 km with last 8 km at MP; Thu 2x12 min threshold; Wed pool 30 + Fri 15 mobility	5.3 h / 38 km	PEAK week and LAST long run (3 weeks out, Sep 21).
14	Sep 22-Sep 28	Taper	Sun 20 km easy w/ 5 km at MP; Thu 4x1 km @10K pace (5:30); Wed pool 30 + Fri 15	4.4 h / 30 km	Taper 1: running volume about -21% vs peak, intensity kept.
15	Sep 29-Oct 05	Taper	Sun 14 km easy; Thu 4 km w/ 3x1 km at MP; Wed pool 30	3.3 h / 22 km	Taper 2: running volume about -42% vs peak.
16	Oct 06-Oct 12	Race	Mon 4 km easy; Wed 4 km w/ 4x20s strides; Fri 3 km shakeout; SUN: CHICAGO MARATHON 42.2 km, target 5:41/km	5.33 h / 11 + 42.2 race km	Race week; expo Thu-Sat.

Easy long runs use RPE 4-5. MP segments are 5:41/km. Weekly km counts running only; pool and strength minutes are inside the hours column.

3. Session definitions

Paces derived from your 55:00 10K (5:30/km) - my inference, recalibrate after the Week 10 test

- **Easy / long (RPE 4-5, can talk):** 7:15-7:45/km, or by feel on treadmill/hills. Purpose: aerobic base with low shin load. Substitute: pool or deep-water running at equal minutes.
- **Strides:** 20 s fast but relaxed (about 5K pace, 5:15/km), 40-60 s walk/jog. Purpose: form and economy.
- **Threshold (RPE 7, "comfortably hard"):** 5:35-5:45/km. Purpose: raises sustainable pace. Recalibrate to the 10K trial: threshold is about 10-15 s/km slower than 10K race pace.
- **5K pace intervals:** 5:15/km (55:00 10K converted with Riegel 1.06 gives 26:23 for 5K, computed). Substitute: effort RPE 8 on the treadmill if GPS is unreliable.

Wk	Dates	Phase	Key sessions (intensity)	Hours / km	Notes
-			Marathon pace (MP): 5:41/km (9:09/mile). Purpose: rehearse pace, fueling and shoes. Use effort-based pacing if GPS drifts; check on 1 km markers.		
-			10K time trial (Wk 10): flat course or treadmill at 1% incline, even effort, warm up 15 min, full recovery from the Week 9 session. Stop if shin pain rises above 3/10.		
-			Pool session: 40 min aqua-jog/deep-water running (steady effort, 4-6 x 3 min harder) or laps. Purpose: aerobic load without impact; replaces any run on a shin-pain day.		

Shin splints (medial tibial stress syndrome)

A review describes MTSS as an overuse injury linked to sudden mileage increases, with rest relieving pain and continued training without any break making pain worse; a stress fracture can look similar and may need imaging ([Shin Splint: A Review, PMC, accessed Oct 6, 2026](#)). Plan response: Week 1 starts at 18 km (below your 20 km), the pool replaces a run whenever pain is above 2/10 or lingers next morning, and weekly increases stay near 10%. See a clinician or physio before starting hard sessions (Week 5), and stop and seek care for sharp, worsening or persistent pain or pain at night. Do not run through pain.

4. Goal-day logistics (Sunday, Oct 12, 2025)

Source key: [2025] = NBC Chicago, published Oct 9, 2025, updated Oct 12, 2025. [Official] = [chicagomarathon.com](#) pages fetched Oct 6, 2026 that now describe the 2026 edition (Oct 11, 2026); those items are labeled and should be re-confirmed against the 2025 participant guide, which I could not retrieve.

Taper

A 2023 systematic review and meta-analysis of 14 studies concluded that a taper of 21 days or less, cutting volume by 41-60% while keeping intensity and frequency, is effective ([Wang et al., PLOS One, 2023](#)). This plan: last long run Sep 21 (28 km), then running km of 30 (-21% vs peak), 22 (-42%) and 11 km plus the race in race week. Keep Thursday sessions short but hold the paces.

Pre-race timeline

- **Thu Oct 9 - Sat Oct 11 (expo, packet pickup):** McCormick Place, Lakeside Center Hall D, 2301 S. Martin Luther King Drive; Thu 11 am-6 pm, Fri and Sat 9 am-6 pm [2025]. Pickup is in person only - packets are not available race day or by proxy, and you need photo ID plus the emailed pickup ticket [Official, 2026 edition: [participant page](#)].
- **Sat Oct 11:** Abbott Chicago 5K runs the same morning (do not race it; at most a 15 min jog). Lay out kit, bib, timing chip, gear-check bag; early dinner familiar foods.
- **Sun Oct 12 race morning:** Wave 1 starts 7:30 am, Wave 2 8:00 am, Wave 3 8:35 am [2025]. Official-site schedule for 2026 lists Grant Park and corrals opening at 5:30 am and corrals closing 10-15 minutes before each wave [Official]; confirm your corral/wave in your pickup email. Race-day street closures began about 6 am [2025].
- **Gear check:** use your clear event bag, bib-colour (red/blue/orange) area; bags must be collected by 4 pm; no valuables [Official, 2026].

Course, cutoff and effort plan

The race starts and finishes in Grant Park through 29 neighborhoods and is promoted as flat and fast; I did not find an elevation profile in the pages I could open, so no gain/loss figures are given ([official course page](#)). Course time limit is 6 h 30 min (15:00/mile) [2025; Official]. Plan: first 5 km at 5:45-5:50/km, settle to 5:41/km by 10 km, hold through 32 km (mile 20), then run by effort; the official Pace Team is an option (check which finish times it offers). Do not bank time early: the Week 10 gate test determines whether this A-plan applies, otherwise start near 5:55-6:00/km. Check pace against the course clocks, which sit every 5 km with kilometer markers (official course page).

Fueling and hydration

- On course: 20 aid stations about 1-2 miles apart with water and Gatorade Endurance Formula; Maurten Gel 100 (25 g carbohydrate) at the Hydrogel Fuel Depots at mile 12.4 and mile 18.1; bananas at miles 20.2-23 (Aid Stations 16-18) [Official, 2026 edition].
- Carry your own gels you have trained with; I did not retrieve a citable carbohydrate-per-hour figure this run, so use the long runs in Weeks 6-13 to find the intake you tolerate, and read the Burke et al. 2011 carbohydrate guidelines or a sports dietitian for a target (not verified here).
- Allowed hydration: handheld bottles, soft flasks, front-pocket vests, belts; hydration bladders/backpacks are prohibited [Official, 2026].

Kit and rules

Wk	Dates	Phase	Key sessions (intensity)	Hours / km	Notes
- Wheeled devices, selfie sticks and cameras/video devices on the course are prohibited; headphones are allowed but you must stay alert [Official, 2026]. Wear only shoes and kit used in long runs; discard layers only in marked clothing-collection zones [Official, 2026].					

5. Do next

- Confirm the calendar: if the race you mean is Oct 11, 2026 or later, re-date the plan so Week 16 ends on race Sunday.
- Book a clinician or physio check on the shins before Week 5 (Jul 21), and keep Week 1-4 running pain-free.
- Schedule the Week 10 10K time trial (about Aug 28) and the 28 km long run (Sep 21) in your calendar now, and decide target A/B at the gate.
- Plan the Aug 4-10 trip: hotel treadmill or safe route, pack running shoes, no quality sessions.
- Before race week, find your 2025 corral/wave in the Packet Pick-up email and book the expo slot (Thu-Sat).

6. Open items

- Unverified: 2025 participant guide, corral assignment for a 4:00 finish, official 2025 elevation profile, 2025 aid-station locations (only the 2026-edition page was retrievable), carbohydrate-per-hour guidance, and race-day weather.
- Pace zones, easy-pace speeds and the 4:05-4:15 range are my estimates from your 10K; recalibrate after the Week 10 test.
- Coverage: the ACSM position stand PDF and the Burke 2011 carbohydrate paper (tandfonline) were not readable (raw PDF / 403); the Frontiers marathon-taper paper was opened but not used for specific figures.

7. Sources (accessed Oct 6, 2026)

- [NBC Chicago: 2025 Chicago Marathon what to know \(pub. Oct 9, 2025, updated Oct 12, 2025\)](#)
- [Chicago Marathon: Participant Information \(2026 edition\)](#)
- [Chicago Marathon: Course \(2026 edition\)](#)
- [Wang et al. 2023, Effects of tapering on performance in endurance athletes \(PLOS One\)](#)
- [Shin Splint: A Review \(PMC\)](#)
- [Al Fit Hub: Riegel formula limits \(secondary source, updated May 25, 2026\)](#)