



Welcome to another issue of The Green Pennant Special. It is through this publication that we endeavor to keep the membership informed on happenings in the organization and the transit industry.

### \*\*\* DECEMBER MEETING \*\*\*

The December meeting of The Omnibus Society of America will be held on December 6, 1996, at the Welles Park Field House, located at 2333 W. Sunnyside in Chicago.

### \*\*\* CTA CORNER \*\*\*

A spectacular fire on Saturday night, October 25, 1996, saw the total destruction of the former CTA Wilson shops at Wilson avenue on the Red Line.

Passengers were forced to transfer to shuttle buses to get around the scene of the fire. And through service did not resume until the following Tuesday when all but one of the four tracks were reopened to traffic.

One of the outer walls of the building collapsed and buried the closest of the four tracks to the building under a mountain of rubble.

The Wilson shops had been closed by the CTA and all work that had been previously performed there have been moved to other sites.

\* The RTA "will veto" any contract or arbitration award that increases the CTA's union labor cost, RTA Chairman Thomas McCracken said.

The CTA has been negotiating with its 17 collective bargaining units - including the bus operators union, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 241, and the rail union ATU local 308 - since their contracts expired December 31.

However, CTA President David Mosena, in presenting the agency's \$800 million 1997 budget proposal, said the spending plan does not provide for any increase in union wages.

The agency's labor costs under the budget will be \$581 million - an increase of \$17.6 million, partly because of the full-year costs of operating the Green Line, which was reopened after major renovations. McCracken said legislation gives the RTA

oversight and veto power over the budgets of its three service boards. If the CTA goes over budget on union labor costs, it would have to submit an amended budget to the RTA.

It would be unprecedented, McCracken acknowledged, but the RTA will reject any such amendment, sending the matter back to the CTA and its unions.

He said that he would ask the RTA to let the CTA operate with a budget that's up to \$20 million out of balance for part of 1997. Meanwhile, RTA officials are waiting to see what service adjustments the CTA makes to close the gap.

\* Replacing the CTA's late-night L and subway "owl service" with specialized small-bus services is being studied by the cash strapped transit authority, President Mosena said.

The CTA's midnight to 5 a.m. operations serve 8,500 rapid transit riders daily and 31,000 bus riders, CTA reports show.

Mosena said, "we have to look at anything that that can save money. including redesigning bus routes and schedules, having buses stop every other block, cutting professional staff, privatizing bus maintenance, selling unneeded real estate, and halting the stockpiling of bus and rail system parts.

Other CTA executives have talked about ending late-night rapid transit service. and the CTA planned to drop owl service when the renovated Green Line reopened this spring. But public protests forced the transit authority to continue the service while studying possible alternatives.

\* In a pilot program that could ultimately yield a harvest of convenience for commuters, Pace and the CTA are testing a joint transfer card system on eight north suburban bus routes.

The Transfer Card demonstration project allows commuters to purchase a transfer card on their CTA or Pace bus route and have it honored on the complementary system.

The eight Pace routes involved in the demonstration project are: (cont. on page 2)



(cont. from page 1)

#### CTA CORNER

421/Wilmette Ave, 422/Lake Avenue, 423/Sheridan. 424/Roosevelt to Glenview, 425/Cermak to Glenview, 213/Green Bay Road, 215/Crawford Avenue and 254/Cicero Avenue.

#### \*\*\* PACE PATTERN \*\*\*

The Pace board has approved a belt-tightening budget that calls for ending some bus routes and imposing a freeze on hiring and some benefits.

Although the suburban bus agency's \$110.3 million spending plan for 1997 operations is \$3.4 million less than needed next year, no general fare increase will be required to balance the budget, officials said.

Pace plans to eliminate several low ridership routes, but details remain unsettled. Further savings will come from a freeze on hiring and, for nonunion workers, on benefits. The only fare increase is for its expanding paratransit services for disabled people, which would go up 50 cents to a fare of \$2.

Pace had a 1996 budget of \$105 million. Its 1997 financial plan includes a federal grant of \$2 million for clean-air projects and a shift of \$1 million in capital funds to operations.

#### \*\*\* CHUNNEL FIRE \*\*\*

On Monday, November 18th, firefighters from two countries battled their worst nightmare - a stubborn blaze under the English Channel in the new rail tunnel linking Europe with Great Britain. When it was over, there were melted rail, burned wires, severe damage in the "Chunnel," and embarrassing questions on both sides of the water.

Choking from smoke and fumes, 31 truck drivers and three crew members escaped from a Britain-bound freight train that burst into flames about 10 miles from Calais, a third of the way through the 31-mile tunnel.

By Tuesday night, the eight injured people were on their way home. But the tunnel itself was closed amid traffic chaos on both sides

of the channel that was compounded by gales and snow.

There was praise for the rescue operation and for firefighters who braved searing heat. But the incident raised new questions about the trouble-plagued Chunnel. As travelers and truckers jostled for space on airplanes and ferries, Eurotunnel shares slumped in London trading.

Le Shuttle - as the French call the Chunnel express - has carried almost 1 million trucks without serious incident and there was no sign of trouble Monday night when the train left Calais carrying 29 trucks, most 44-ton 18-wheelers and each in its own lattice-sided rail car.

Because the cars are open sided, truck drivers make the 20-minute journey through the 31-mile-tunnel in a special lounge car, unlike motorists who remain with their cars in enclosed rail cars designed to withstand fire for at least 30 minutes. Flammable and hazardous cargoes are banned in the tunnel.

Monday's blaze apparently began near the rear of the train in a truck carrying polystyrene packing material and quickly spread to five other trucks. In all, 15 trucks and the rear locomotive were damaged before the fire was extinguished.

Smoke enveloped the train without warning, filling the lounge car with a noxious vapor that choked the truck drivers.

