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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

Run 147

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.

*** FEBRUARY MEETING ***

The February meeting of The Omnibus Society of America will be held on February 7, 1997, at the Welles Park Field House, located at 2333 W. Sunnyside Avenue in Chicago. The meeting will begin at 6:30pm.

Our program for the evening will be a slide presentation by Tom Carpenter on Lisbon Transportation.

*** MARCH MEETING ***

The March meeting of The Omnibus Society of America will be held on March 7, 1997, at the Welles Park Field House located at 2333 W. Sunnyside Avenue in Chicago. The meeting will begin at 6:30pm.

Our meeting for the evening will be a slide presentation by Walter Collins: "Part 1 - Bill Hoffman - Rapid Transit".

*** APRIL MEETING ***

The April meeting of The Omnibus Society of America will be held on April 4, 1997, at the Welles Park Field House located at 2333 W. Sunnyside in Chicago. The meeting will begin at 6:30pm.

Our meeting for the evening will be a slide presentation by Don Idarius: "A Calvacade of Buses - slides of Gordon Lloyd and Don Idarius of 87 cities".

*** CTA CORNER ***

The City of Chicago has begun a reconstruction project on Michigan Avenue between Wacker and Randolph that has reduced the roadway to one lane. Because of this, the CTA has moved 12 bus routes that use Michigan to State.

In an article in the January 22nd issue of the Chicago Sun-Times, riders timed their trips and a trip between Oak and Michigan to Congress and Michigan took 18 minutes. A trip between Vanburen and Michigan to

Chicago and Michigan took 13 minutes.

One CTA rider stated that his trip is taking between 20 to 30 minutes longer to complete because of the construction and the detour the buses are taking.

The Michigan Avenue reconstruction will not be finished until sometime in 1998.

* On Monday, January 13th, Mayor Daley warned CTA riders to brace for service cuts and prodded the Illinois Legislator to come up with a stable funding source for mass transit.

Daley said the the CTA is "undergoing a reinvention" and progress already has been made. He cited a new four-year contract with CTA unions that includes cost-cutting concessions and several "rider Friendly" initiatives, such as first-ever train schedules and a station cleanup program.

"Service changes will have to be made so that CTA remains viable into the next century," Daley said. "And the federal and state governments have to do their parts ... We need funding stability."

CTA President David Mosena said the cuts and adjustments the mayor talked about are likely to include overnight L service, which has been on the chopping block for years.

"It may not be necessarily go," Mosena said. "We may change it to a service lower-cost, but provides the same service using different kinds of vehicles. You could use minivans. You could use a subscription service. We're looking at a whole range of options to save the CTA money, but still provide the service. We don't want to leave any neighborhood stranded," Mosena said.

He added, "The population has shrunk. Commuting patterns have changed. And we have to make the CTA financially viable for year 2000 and beyond.

* A City Council committee agreed to hold hearings to determine an appropriate civic celebration to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Loop elevated, built by Charles T. Yerkes and opened to passengers on October 3, 1897. Ald. Bernard Stone (50th) said the centennial should include special classes on Yerkes in the public schools.

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CTA CORNER

The vote came after aldermen heard a special performance from the cast of "Titans," an upcoming musical about Yerkes and the building of the "L".

*** METRA MATTERS ***

On February 3rd, commuters who use Metra's newest line, the 5-month-old North Central Service, got an enhanced schedule designed to build on what officials said is growing ridership.

On the North Central line, a new morning weekday train has been added that departs Antioch at 7:30 am for the trip to Union Station, while a new evening train departs downtown at 6:17 pm.

Some existing trains on the line also were shifted to different time slots in a fine-tuning of the schedule.

The new outbound evening train is expected to be particularly attractive because it will add flexibility for riders who sometimes work late. The latest of the four trains that departed Chicago under the old schedule left at 5:38 pm.

Trains also are making a new stop at the Western Avenue station under the revamped schedule in an alteration designed to serve riders who work and shop in the North Michigan Avenue area. They will be able to get to and from the station on the CTA Mag Mile Express bus route.

Stations in Libertyville and Vernon Hills opened after the North Central began operating August 19th, adding to the fledgling line's customer base.

*** AMTRAK ARRIVALS ***

Governor Jim Edgar announced a three-year contract between the state and Amtrak that will continue rail service for passengers traveling between Chicago and Downstate.

The deal also provides for unprecedented fines against the railroad whenever its trains leave the station late.

Under the agreement, which takes effect July 1, the state will pay Amtrak \$7 million to continue service this year on routes linking Chicago with St. Louis, Carbondale and Quincy. The state is expected to pay Amtrak \$7.55 million and \$7.95 million in 1998 and 1999, respectively.

Without the new contract, the state could have faced subsidy costs of up to \$15 million by the year 2000.

In the past, Amtrak had no incentive to make its rail service between Chicago and the Downstate cities more efficient because the state would absorb any operating losses, said Debbie Hare, an Amtrak spokeswoman.

But under the new agreement, the state will not be obligated to pay any more than the amounts spelled out in the contract.

The three routes - the Statehouse, the Ilini and the Illinois Zephyr - serve several university towns. Hare said fares on the routes could increase or decrease depending on market conditions.

The contract also allows the state to levy \$2,700 fines against the railroad whenever a train departs more than 30 minutes late from its point of origin. The state also can fine Amtrak if its departures aren't on-time at least 99 percent of the time.

Amtrak officials said they also will consider ways to improve the cost-effectiveness of providing food to train passengers and will begin offering special deals on the Illinois routes.

The week of January 11, Amtrak introduced a program that allows passengers buying tickets on any of the three routes to bring a companion who rides free.

*** INFO REQUEST ***

Dave Cook of 3833 Kirk Street Skokie, IL 60076 is looking for slides, negatives, prints of the Evanston Bus Company. If any of our members can supply Dave with photos, etc., of Evanston Bus, please get in touch with him at the above address or at telephone number 847-679-6535.