



APRIL 1997

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

RUN 149

Welcome to another issue of The Green Pennant Special. It is through this publication that we hope to keep our membership informed on happenings in Chicago and the transit area.

If any member comes across any news stories that would be of interest for publication in Green Pennant, please send it to the Editor - Melvin Bernero, 3440 W. Evergreen Ave., Chicago, IL 60651-2309, or fax it to 773-342-6450.

*** MARCH MEETING ***

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

Our meeting for the evening: "Windy City 'L' - breezing through History on the Loop, South Side and Lake Street Lines" was a slide presentation by Walter Collins.

It was a very enjoyable program.

*** 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 6:30 pm.

Our meeting for the evening "A Cavalcade of Buses" will be presented by Don Idarius. On this evening we will be visiting some 80 bus companies and spanning a great many years in doing so.

This should prove to be a very enjoyable evening, hope to see you there.

*** CTA CORNER ***

* On or about March 10th, the CTA extended the No. 12 Roosevelt Road bus line east along Roosevelt Road from Michigan Avenue to the Grant Park museum campus on the lakefront.

Buses on the No. 12 route will now provide direct service every 10 to 15 minutes, seven days a week, to the Field Museum of Natural History, the Shedd Aquarium and Oceanarium and Adler Planetarium. Buses will also serve Soldier Field.

* With a financial crisis threatening to disrupt CTA services, Mayor Daley on March 1st proposed raising the gas tax - both to help bail out the transit agency and to repair regional roads and highways.

His proposal calls for the state to issue bonds to provide money to

upgrade the CTA's aging bus and train fleet. The bonds would be repaid through the gas tax increase, auto license plates and other user fees.

The summit, convened by Daley at the urging a year ago of Metro Seniors in Action, a statewide senior citizens group, was attended by dozens of seniors who complained of inadequate bus and train service and worn-out CTA equipment.

CTA officials, who are mulling major cutbacks because of reductions in state and federal funding and a 25 percent decline in ridership over the last six years, said the condition of equipment and stations are at a critical stage.

"One-quarter of the bus fleet is being kept alive by our maintenance staff, beyond its federal useful life, because we don't have the money to buy new ones," said CTA President David Mosena.

Daley's proposal also called for legislation that would allow employers to take a tax credit for providing mass transit passes, tokens or vouchers to their employees, and a \$23 million increase in the state subsidy the CTA receives to reduce senior and student fares.

Mayor Daley said he wants to make the public transportation tax breaks widely available - to everyone from people getting off welfare to salaried workers.

Daley suggested that people making less than \$70,000 a year could be eligible. An average bus or train rider might be able to deduct \$25 a week from taxable income. A commuter spending \$105 on a monthly train pass from Schaumburg to the city could deduct \$1,260 from annual taxable income. However, lawmakers could place limits on the deduction - if the idea gets that far.

The CTA has said it needs \$2.7 billion to upgrade its infrastructure over the next five years, but only expects \$855 million in state and federal aid.

* Mayor Daley's campaign for a gas tax increase to rebuild the CTA's infrastructure got help on March 24th when a coalition of 10,000 Chicago area employers agreed to lobby for it. Business Leaders for Transportation said it was "sounding an alarm" about an impending transit crisis to "underscore the link between a healthy transportation system and the state's economy."

CTA President David Mosena said at a City Council hearing that the agency requires \$1.9 billion over the next five years to meet its capital needs. Without money from Washington or Springfield, parts of the Blue Line may have to be closed, he said.

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CTA CORNER

Trolley-style buses could soon be moving visitors among the Grant Park museum campus, McCormick Place and Navy Pier under a plan being developed by city transportation officials.

The Chicago Transportation Department is scheduled to complete a lakefront access report in early April. It would be offered to transit agencies and other city departments, then opened for public comment.

But an early glimpse shows that transportation experts are trying to link several downtown and lakefront features that so far have resisted all such attempts. However, no final recommendations have been offered.

Planners say that for all that's right with Chicago's lakefront, it has one glaring shortcoming - a lack of transportation alternatives.

Whether you are a tourist, conventioner or parent taking your kids out for the day, once you get to the Adler Planetarium or nearby museums, for instance, going to Navy Pier is, a chore.

You can walk or take a taxi. And then another taxi or several CTA buses to get back to your hotel. But how do you get back to McCormick Place? Another taxi or a few more buses.

It's not exactly a seamless trip, and making it so is the goal of the lakefront access plan, said Tim Martin, chief highway engineer for the city.

"We're looking at a comprehensive view of everything from Ohio and Ontario south to 31st Street, and from the lake west to at least the Metra stations. . . . We've asked what . . . relatively inexpensive components need to be added to the system to integrate everything."

Rubber-tire, trolley-style vehicles might figure into the mix.

Try to visualize a day in the near future:

Trolleys run up and down the lakefront on Lake Shore Drive, shuttling visiting families from the campus to Buckingham Fountain, Monroe harbor and Navy Pier.

Meanwhile, to accommodate people who want to drive to lakefront events, larger shuttle buses run a fixed route that includes stops at parking lots and garages in the West Loop, hotels along Michigan and at McCormick Place, Soldier Field and the museums.

Dedicated lanes on Columbus Drive allow buses to move to and from the convention center, cultural centers and Randolph Street parking and mass transit.

Off-peak commuter trains operating on changed schedules are synchronizing service with weekend lakefront activities. Pedestrians and bicyclists have more paths and bike rental stands to accommodate their needs.

And an unused portion of a lower-level railroad right-of-way is being used by large tour coaches to get passengers to lakefront destinations without messing up traffic on Lake Shore Drive.

All of these low-tech approaches are being discussed, sources said, because funding from Washington and Springfield for major new infrastructure is expected to be sparse.

Whatever is decided upon must be reliable, dependable and can not rely on a few heavy-usage days.

*** RAIL NEWS ***

* Explosive growth and congested roads have DuPage County officials lining up behind a proposal to put a commuter rail line through the north end of the county.

County officials may have already voted to urge the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) to include a South Elgin-to-Elmhurst "light rail" commuter line, running along the Illinois Central Railroad tracks on its list of high-priority transportation projects.

Proponents want CATS to add the project to its priority list, called the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan. The organization helps set regional transportation policy and determines which projects receive federal funding.

Three commuter lines already slice through the county, but its northern tier of towns - including fast-growing Carol Stream, Addison, Bloomingdale and Glendale Heights - have little rail service.

Adding an 18-mile line from South Elgin in Kane County to Elmhurst - and possibly linking it to other Metra lines to Chicago - could improve east-west commutes and relieve roadway congestion.

*** CLEVELAND NEWS ***

* Effective March 23rd, a new fare schedule began that is aimed at making travel on RTA's Waterfront Line even more convenient and enjoyable.

With focus on the recreational or sightseeing traveler, the new Waterfront Line fare will be \$1.50 (\$.50 for seniors/disabled riders with an RTA ID card).

When you board a train at Tower City or any of the other four Waterfront Line stations you pay the \$1.50 fare and receive a pass good for four hours of unlimited use of the Waterfront Line. With this pass, customers are able to travel in either direction, exit and reboard the Waterfront Line as often as they like, without requiring an additional fare.

Once the pass expires, a customer is required to purchase a new pass for an additional four hours of service. When using the Waterfront Line to connect with other RTA bus or rail service, the Waterfront "pass" can be used as a transfer provided it is within the four-hour period.

Customers who board a Blue or Green Line train at a station east of Tower City are required to pay the \$1.50 fare when exiting their train at a Waterfront Line station and upon request will receive a standard two-hour transfer.

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CLEVELAND NEWS

The four-hour Waterfront Line pass can only be purchased when boarding a train at one of the Waterfront Line stations.

Total ridership is far greater than predicted. The Waterfront Line carried an estimated 57,000 rides in January, and 786,400 rides from its opening seven months ago (July 10) through January 31.

* March 23rd saw the revision of the RTA's system-wide transfer policy to allow free stopovers and more freedom to ride to destinations.

Under the new policy, transfers may be used for stopovers and to change routes, but are not intended for round trips. They may be used to transfer from Local to Express service if the difference in fare is paid.

With each paid fare, a customer is entitled to receive one transfer, which may be used for up to three additional rides within a two-hour time limit.

* March 23rd also saw the elimination of the 25 cent charge for trips on RTA's "Owl Service" between 1 am to 6 am.

These trips include service on the following routes: #1 St. Clair; #6 Euclid; #10 East 105; #14 Kinsman; #19 Broadway-Miles; #20A West 25th; #35 Broadview-Quincy; #22 Lorain Avenue; and #326 Detroit-Superior.

*** DENVER NEWS ***

A deeply divided Regional Transportation District board narrowly agreed on April 26th to accept \$120 million in federal funds to complete light-rail expansion into the southwest metro area.

All eight of the board members who showed up for a hastily called board meeting voted to accept the "Full Funding Grant Agreement" from the Federal Transit Administration.

The remaining seven, many whom have expressed opposition to extending light-rail, were absent. At least one of them said he stayed away from the meeting as a protest and he claimed others did, too.

The Southwest Corridor expansion is expected to cost \$142.5 million, according to RTD documents. The new line will be 8.7 miles long and will connect to the current light-rail line terminal at Interstate 25 and Broadway. The expansion will run parallel to South Santa Fe Drive and terminate at Mineral Avenue in Littleton.

Congressional approval of the \$120 expenditure is still necessary before construction can begin. Jep Seman, a senior vice president with the Jefferson Group, the district's lobbying firm, does not expect Congress to deny the money.

The district will receive the \$120 million incrementally, according to RTD reports.

The first \$8 million is expected to be doled out by federal Transportation Secretary Federico Pena at the intersection of I-25 and Broadway in a ceremony on May 9, said RTD chairman Ben Klein.

by 2000, RTD spokesman Scott Reed said.

The schism in the board over whether to accept the federal money could significantly complicate the future of the project, said a person working with RTD, who asked not to be identified.

Jon Caldara, who is an RTD director from the Boulder area, wrote a letter to the board in which he stated, "The absence of myself and nearly half of the Board of Directors from this meeting is meant as a show of opposition for this project at this time".

Klein, who in the past opposed the expansion but spoke and voted in favor of it, said Caldara should have appeared at the meeting to make his statement in person.

The mayors of Littleton and Englewood, a representative of the Boulder City Council, and a representative of Colorado Environmental Coalition all spoke in favor of light rail before the vote.

Jack McCroskey, a past chairman of the RTD board, supports the concept of light rail, but he said it is a mistake to run the expansion to Littleton.

"Building it to Littleton is a real loser, and it's being done for political reasons," he said. "Going to the airport or the (Denver) tech center is the best way to do it."

* A group of Five Points business owners is suing a light-rail construction company for up to \$5 million for allegedly blocking customers from their stores, costing them profits since 1994.

Frustrated by the Regional Transportation District's refusal to pay damages, the merchants have gone after light-rail builder Kiewit Western Construction in a lawsuit filed April 8 in Denver District Court.

The suit seeks unspecified damages, but one of the business owners said this week they want all of the \$5 million construction bond that they say Kiewit posted with RTD in order to gain the original contract.

Kiewit Construction officials said that they worked diligently with RTD to keep access to Five Points businesses open at all times and constantly warned merchants and residents about the coming phases of construction.

Kiewit is a heavy-construction firm that has been involved in a number of major metro-area projects, including Denver International Airport.

The suit does not name RTD as a defendant. The business owners along Welton Street have tried for more than two years to get compensation from RTD for losses they claim they suffered during construction of light rail in 1994.

But the transit agency has cited legal precedents that prohibit a government agency from providing cash compensation for lost business, because construction projects such as light rail are for the larger good of the community. RTD also has said that it tried to work with north-east Denver merchants to minimize disruption from light rail and market their new connection to downtown.

The 5.3 mile central light-rail line runs from Interstate 25 and Broadway on the south through downtown and along Welton Street to the north-east, ending at 30th and Downing streets.

KEESHIN TRANSPORTATION LP

Des Plaines, IL

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#	BUILDER	MODEL	VIN	BLT	ACQUIRED
832	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7581/S14023	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 832
833	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7571/S14013	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 833
834	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7575/S14017	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 834
835	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7670/S14112	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 835
836	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7693/S14135	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 836
837	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7632/S14074	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 837
838	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7698/S14140	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 838
839	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7663/S14105	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 839
840	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7671/S14113	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 840
841	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7602/S14044	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 841
842	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7620/S14062	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 842
843	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7679/S14121	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 843
844	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7622/S14064	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 844
845	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7619/S14061	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 845
846	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7645/S14087	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 846
847	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7653/S14095	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 847
848	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7668/S14110	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 848
849	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7628/S14070	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 849
850	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7658/S14100	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 850
851	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7583/S14025	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 851
852	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7641/S14083	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 852
853	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7553/S13995	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 853
854	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7680/S14122	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 854
855	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7654/S14096	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 855
856	MCI	MC-5C (CD)	7697/S14139	79	(91) Ex CW Transportation 856

(CD) Equipped with Center Door

CV1-CV5	Ford	E350	LHA06493,504,494 503,495	New
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Bus Chicago is Keeshin's contract operation for Continental Bank

Dispositions

1-36	City of Chicago (IL) 1-36
829,834,851,830	Arrow Line (CT) 110-113

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