



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC. November 2002

Welcome to another issue of The Green Pennant Special, the official publication of The Omnibus Society of America.

Through this publication we hope to keep our readers informed of events happening in the transit industry in Chicago and other cities in the United States.

### • NOVEMBER OSA MEETING

The next regular meetings of the Omnibus Society of America will be on November 1, 2002, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2751 W. Winona Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The meeting will be start at 7:00 pm.

The hospital is on California near Foster. Winona is one half block south of Foster. By public transportation, take the 92 Foster to California. From the Ravenswood Brown Line, take the 93 North California from Kimball, get off after it turns onto California from Foster and walk back south. Or, take the 11 Lincoln from Western, get off at Carmen (One block south of Foster) and walk west on Winona.

There is some parking on California and Winona. The parking structure is on the west side of California just south of Foster.

The meeting will be given by longtime member Ray DeGroote. Ray will be presenting two programs in one. Ray was in Ukraine in 2001 and visited several tram and trolleybus systems while there. Featured will be the interurban trolleybus system in the Crimea.

Ray also visited Cuba on the tour arranged by CERA in April 2002. We will see his views of this trip, plus others taken by Bill Reynolds, Bruce Moffat and Dick Aaron.

### • ELECTION

The board positions of Steve Klabish and Melvin Bernero are up for election this year. There are three members seeking election to fill these two positions. The three nominees are John Allen, Melvin Bernero and William Shapotkin. Ballots will be mailed with the December issue of the Green Pennant Special and must be received before the start of the December meeting to be counted.

### • CTA HAPPENINGS

Chicago Transit Authority bus customers can look forward to clearer messages informing them of their upcoming stops as the result of new technology employed by the agency. The CTA entered into a \$14.8 million contract with Clever Devices of Syosset, New York, for

the acquisition of an Automated Voice Annunciation System (AVAS) and an Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) that will significantly enhance service for CTA's bus customers.

The AVAS will provide automated bus stop announcements on CTA buses and electronic signs that display the upcoming stop. When buses are at stops, the AVAS will announce the route and destination of the bus.

The announcement system determines its position by using a combination of Global Positioning Satellites (GPS), odometer inputs that provide distance traveled, and a gyroscope that observes changes in direction.

The Automated Passenger Counter system also is based on global positioning satellite technology and provides an accurate count of where customers board and alight at any given point on a route.

Clever Devices will install the system on all but the oldest CTA buses, which are nearing retirement. The passenger counter will be installed on 266 of those buses, 14 percent of the fleet, which will allow the CTA to get an accurate sample of customer information throughout the service area. All buses purchased by CTA in the future will come equipped with both systems in place. Installation and development of the announcements and associated data bases will take place between now and December 2003, with automated announcements in full use by the end of 2004.

CTA bus and rail customers will soon experience improved service on thirteen bus routes and two rail lines as a result of service changes approved on October 9, 2002, by the Chicago Transit Board. The bus route modifications reflect the CTA's analysis of customer demand and efforts to reduce travel time and ease traffic congestion. The changes also will add opportunities for customers to connect with other service.

The changes are guided by the CTA's service standards, which use five key measures to determine how services are designed. These include the distance an average customer travels to reach a bus stop or 'L' station, the hours and days a route operates, frequency of service, the level of ridership at the busiest location on the route, and the number of customers a CTA vehicle carries per hour.

Most of the bus changes will take effect December 22. The rail changes will become effective December 29.

(cont. on page 2)



## CTA

The most significant change will be experimental service to downtown on the X21 Cermak Express route, which currently operates on weekends and holidays between North Riverside Park Mall and McCormick Place. The Blue Line Transit Task Force requested the change to provide direct service to the West Side Medical Center complex and to the downtown area on weekends.

### Other Bus Service Changes

#N4 Cottage Grove owl service will be extended from 59th to 63rd to connect with all-night service on the #N63 63rd bus route.

#7 Harrison buses will operate east via Harrison and Canal to Jackson and west via Adams and Clinton to better serve Union Station and the Greyhound bus terminal.

The #18 16th/18th route will be connected on the west with the Blue Line at Cicero/Cermak and on the east with the Red Line at Cermak/Chinatown as a six-month experimental project.

#44 Wallace/Racine buses will end their northbound trips at the Halsted Orange Line station daily. #44 buses currently serve the Cermak/Chinatown Red Line station on weekends and holidays.

#60 Blue Island/26th buses will operate east through downtown via Harrison and Canal to Washington and west via Madison and Clinton to Harrison to provide better connections between the UIC Campus and both Union Station and the Ogilvie Transportation Center (North Western Station), and to offer additional weekend and evening service to the stations from the North Loop area.

Weekday service on the #73 Armitage route will be modified to operate via Armitage, Racine, Cortland, Hermitage and Armitage at all times.

#78 Montrose buses will regularly serve the Montrose Beach throughout the summer and weekends and holidays.

The north terminal of the #86 Narragansett/Ridgeland route will be extended to Montrose to better serve the residential community north and west of the Wright College campus and to allow connections with #78 Montrose buses.

The #95E 93rd/95th route will be modified experimentally for six months to serve the Stony Island Plaza shopping center at 95th and Stony Island.

#126 Jackson buses will use Adams west to Clinton to serve Union Station before continuing over the regular route west on Van Buren.

#152 Addison buses will end their trips via Addison and Lake Shore to West Sheridan Road (3900 North) before returning to Addison for trips west.

The #170 University of Chicago/Midway route will be extended on the east to serve a new Metra Electric station at 57th and Stony Island.

### Rail Service Changes

The experimental expansion of Orange Line service that began last January will become permanent on weekdays, with trains leaving Midway from 3:55 am until 12:55 am and arriving downtown from 4:19 am until 1:19 am. Another 180-day experimental period will be used to determine if revised service hours on weekends should become permanent. Trains on Saturdays will leave Midway from 4:35 am until 12:50 am and on Sundays from 5:35 am until 11:30 pm arriving in the Loop about 24 minutes later.

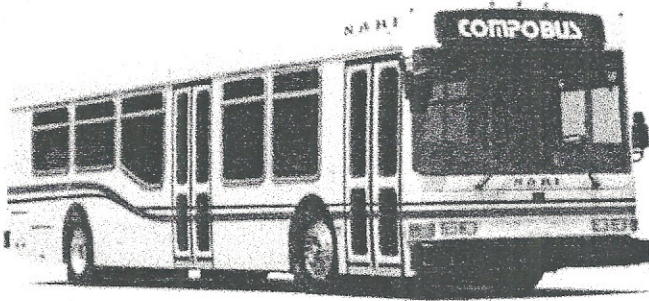
Expanded rush-period Purple Line Express service also will become permanent as a result of experimental testing in place since last December. The first Purple Line Express leaves Linden at 5:24 am and arrives at the Merchandise Mart southbound at 6:04 am. The last afternoon rush-period train leaves Linden at 6:29 pm and arrives at the Mart at 7:09 pm.

**The CTA continues to modernize its bus fleet with the purchase of up to 25 CompoBuses.** CompoBuses are passenger buses constructed of an innovative, lightweight composite fiberglass material that will be more durable during Chicago winters. The CompoBus purchase will be the CTA's next step in its long-term strategy to upgrade its fleet of trains and buses. Since 2000, the CTA has ordered hundreds of buses including 484 Nova buses, which have been delivered and are in service. The CTA expects to begin receiving new low-floor, articulated buses from North American Bus Industries (NABI), Inc. in 2003. NABI also manufactures the CompoBus.

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## CTA



The \$8.6 million contract approved by the Chicago Transit Board at its monthly meeting on October 9, 2002, is funded by Illinois FIRST, the state's infrastructure program. The CTA will be one of the first transit agencies in the world to evaluate the composite bus in the 45-foot version in an urban setting and expects to begin taking delivery of the CompoBus in late 2003.

The CompoBus technology is similar to that used in hulls for racing and pleasure boats. It features a patented fiberglass composite construction process rather than metal construction. The absence of steel eliminates corrosion on the frame and body of the bus. The lightweight design of the CompoBus extends its brake life and reduces tire wear. The bus also has a layer of fire retardant material that meets national standards.

The 45-foot, low-floor, CompoBuses are air conditioned and accessible to customers with disabilities. Other amenities include digital video surveillance systems, automated voice announcement systems, automatic passenger counters, rear wheel deflectors, bike racks and windows coated with a special material making them resistant to etching.

**The CTA began construction** to eliminate the S-shaped portion of elevated track located at Harrison and Wabash on October 18, 2002.

The Harrison Curve, built more than 100 years ago, slows Green and Orange Line trains to 10 miles per hour. Straightening the curve will allow more trains to travel into the Loop per hour, enable the CTA to increase speeds on that section of track from 10 to 35 mph and provide a faster trip for the 58,800 rides taken over that section each day. In addition, replacing the curve's steel columns with concrete will reduce rail and wheel noise generated by the train.

Following a competitive bidding process, CTA hired FH Paschen to handle the Harrison Curve construction. The majority of construction work will take place next to the current structure. Therefore, while customers should expect some slow zones, the CTA will stage construction to minimize service interruptions. There will be service interruption over one weekend next spring for the CTA to link the new alignment up with the existing structure. That date is not yet set. (yourcta.com)

## • METRA MATTERS

**On September 26, 2002**, Metra joined the City of Evanston, the Evanston Chamber of Commerce and EVMark in celebrating "Ride Evanston Week" with a 5:30 pm event showcasing a planned \$3 million project at its Main Street facility, scheduled to start in the spring of 2003.

As part of the project, Metra will build an interior elevator on the inbound platform and a snow and ice-melting ramp on the outbound platform. The station's brick street will similarly become ADA compliant, though original brickwork will be preserved. Antique Talmadge lights are planned on adjacent streets.

**Metra officials joined** Alderman Virginia Rugal and community organizations on October 10, 2002, to dedicate a newly rehabbed 111th Street-Morgan Park station, located at 11046 S. Hale Avenue. The new facility represents one of 12 station improvement projects that Metra has completed in 2002 as a continued program of improvements to its service.

The two year project includes restoration of the two-story 2,860-square-foot wood frame structure with fireplace and waiting area. It provides new vendor space and full-length canopies.

The cost of the station project, including new platforms, lighting, and landscaping, was approximately \$2.8 million. The project was funded by the Federal Transit Administration, Regional Transportation Authority, and Metra.

The 111th Street Station dedication marked the 150th anniversary of Rock Island service. Celebration activities began at 6 am and included train theme music, displays of historical information and photographs, and family entertainment.

Like other stations on the Rock Island Beverly Branch, the 111th Street Station is protected by the Chicago Landmark Commission and dates back to 1892. (Cont. on page 4)



## METRA

**October 11, 2002,** saw the Metra Board of Directors approve an order for 26 new bi-level commuter cars to be used exclusively on Metra's Electric District, which operates nearly 45,000 passenger trips each weekday on the 31-mile route between Chicago's Randolph Station and University Park.

Sumitomo Corporation of America will supply the car shells and components for assembly at Super Steel of Milwaukee, starting in 2004.

Featuring stainless-steel construction and state-of-the-art propulsion, Metra will begin to introduce the new cars in 2004. They will replace a like number of existing carbon steel cars that are prone to rust and are reaching the end of their useful life.

Valued at \$74 million, the new cars will be accessible to riders with disabilities and will be similar in design to the new bi-level gallery cars on Metra's diesel routes. Funding for the purchase comes entirely from Illinois FIRST.

This order is the first phase in a complete replacement of the Metra Electric's 165 Highliner cars, first introduced into Metra's system nearly 30 years ago. An advance prototype car is set to arrive in 2004 for testing. Metra will begin phase-in of the full order of new Highliners in 2005. (metrarail.com)

## • PACE PATTERN

**The Pace Board of Directors** has voted to release the agency's proposed 2003 operating budget and capital plan to public hearings that will take place in each of the six counties Pace serves. The eight hearings are scheduled for October 24-26.

The proposed 2003 operating budget of \$137.3 million is 4.5 percent higher than this year's estimated budget of \$131.3 million. Factors causing the increase are an expansion in paratransit service, higher health care expenses, a cost increase in private-contract bus services, and inflation. To balance the new budget, Pace needs to target at least \$1.65 million in service cutbacks, which is part of the public hearing process. The route reductions may impact Pace's corresponding ADA service.

There is no increase to the fixed-route bus fare of \$1.50 in the proposed budget. Pace's farebox recovery rate, which is the percentage of operating costs covered by rider fares, is required by the RTA to reach 40 percent for the fourth straight year. That high rate has been the major cause for past fare increases and service cuts.

Pace's proposed 2003 capital plan totals \$62.8 million, with the majority earmarked for new buses and vans. Pace expects to purchase 92 fixed-route buses, 44 paratransit buses and 190 vanpool vans to expand services and replace many vehicles at the end of their useful life. Ridership on the Pace system is expected to rise approximately 1 percent in 2003 from this year's estimate of 34.6 million riders.

**Pace has scheduled a public hearing** in Aurora to discuss the reduction or elimination of seven local bus routes. The meeting will take place at 4:30 pm, Friday, November 8, in Conference Rooms A and B on the fifth floor of Aurora City Hall, 44 E. Downer Place.

Pace is in the process of establishing its 2003 budget. The agency has identified several poor-performing routes throughout the suburbs that could get reduced or discontinued in order to balance the new budget. Pace must operate as efficiently as possible with the limited funding it receives.

The Pace service under review at the public hearing in Aurora will be Saturday service on Route 521 High Street; weekday service on Route 524 Downer; Saturday service on Route 528 Fifth Street; weekday and Saturday service on Route 532 Sullivan Road; Saturday service on Route 533 Molitor; weekday service on Route 534 Fox Valley Villages/Highway 59; and Saturday service on Route 802 Aurora/St. Charles.

The major cause for fare increases and route cuts in recent years at Pace is the high farebox recovery rate imposed by the Regional Transportation Authority. The RTA requires that rider fares cover 40 percent of Pace's operating costs. That demand is often double or triple the rate found at many other suburban bus systems across the country. (pacebus.com)