



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 7, 2003, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2751 W. Winona Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The meeting will be start at 7:30 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.

Our program, "Motor buses of Long Island," will be presented by Fred Magullam, a transplanted retiree of LI Bus.

• CTA HAPPENINGS

The Chicago Transit Authority, waking up to the lukewarm response among commuters to its Chicago Card, will introduce a smarter fare card that is more convenient, especially for bus riders.

It will be called the Chicago Card Plus. Customers will have the option of adding value to the card automatically by using a credit card or deducting money from a bank account when the balance falls below a set level. The feature, similar to I-PASS accounts used by Illinois Tollway drivers, eliminates the requirement of recharging the card at CTA vending machines located almost exclusively at train stations.

CTA officials said they hope the next-generation smart card will jump-start sales, even if it won't be the universal smart card of the future that can be used like cash for transit and just about any retail business.

The CTA ordered 100,000 Chicago Cards, with an option to buy 200,000 more, before the cards went on sale for \$5

last November. But only 22,866 cards are in use, said CTA spokeswoman Noelle Gaffney.

Fares are deducted from the Chicago Card's computer chip by placing it against circular touch pads on bus fare boxes or on the turnstiles in rail stations. The procedure is so quick that commuters don't even have to break stride.

The regular CTA fare cards must be inserted into a slot that scans the card's magnetic strip, deducts the fare and returns the card. It takes longer, although the card-dipping-and-retrieval method doesn't back up lines as much as when customers pay with cash.

It may not seem like much, but saving a few seconds per passenger adds significant efficiency improvements, particularly at crowded rush-hour bus stops, where long boarding times knock buses off schedule and result in bus bunching.

The Chicago Card Plus, if it proves popular, should also cut down on the lines at rail stations because fewer people would be queuing up to use the fare-card vending machines.

The success of the Chicago Card Plus will ride on whether commuters consider the cards worth a \$5 investment. Besides quicker boarding, the only other advantage is that the CTA will replace lost or stolen Chicago Cards, including whatever monetary value is on the card, minus a \$5 card-replacement fee. The cards are valid for five years; regular transit cards expire after one year and the CTA won't refund any value remaining on the cards. (Chicago Tribune September 29, 2003)

Mayor Richard Daley on September 30, 2003, tapped a public finance expert to be the CTA's next chairwomen at a time when the cash-strapped agency has taken heat from Daley for considering a round of fare increases next year.

Carole Brown, senior vice president of Lehman Brothers, echoed a mayoral mantra on the possibility of raising fares, saying it would be "the decision of last resort".

"The first thing I am going to do ... is sit down with the financial executives of the board and take a hard look at the budget and make sure we are looking at the expenses to see if we have cut them in ways we can and, secondly, try and identify new revenue sources," Brown said.

Brown also echoed Daley when she commented on a pension fund sweetener for CTA President Frank Kruesi and other top agency executives that Kruesi sought to push through after a recent closed-door session.

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"I think everything we do going forward will be done in an open and transparent process," she said.

But Brown would not foreclose the possibility of supporting the pension change. "I think the merits of the proposal may have been lost in the process," she said. "I have to review the proposal."

Brown worked for First Chicago Capital Markets, Midwest Management Consultants and Mesirow Financial before joining Lehman Brothers in 1999, where she heads the firm's Chicago-based Midwest Municipal Finance office. (Chicago Tribune October 1, 2003)

It was almost as if the Chicago Transit Authority saw the accident coming.

The agency is in the final stage of installing polyurethane devices that work like cowcatchers to sweep people who fall under the rear right wheels of buses out of danger. The protective deflectors have been outfitted on 1,397 CTA buses since last year, said agency spokeswoman Robyn Ziegler.

But there are still about 400 buses to go. Wheel guards will be placed on a total of 1,805 buses when the \$3 million safety upgrade is completed in mid-November she said.

A bus involved in a fatal accident in September was among the vehicles still operating without the guards, which attach to the leading edge of the back right wheel well to deflect fallen victims away from the tires.

A CTA bus killed 75-year-old Chicago resident Velia Medina on September 27 while she crossed the street in the 2400 block of West North Avenue. The bus was making a right turn onto North Avenue and struck Medina, police said. She fell under the bus and was dragged by the wheels. The bus driver was ticketed for failing to yield to a pedestrian.

CTA records indicate that each year about 10 people are seriously injured after falling or being pulled into the right rear wheels of buses. Medina's death was the first accident involving a rear wheel since September 1, 2002, Ziegler said.

About 160 buses that the CTA bought used from Seattle Metro will not be equipped with wheel guards because they will be retired within the year, Ziegler said.

Although the wheel guards will not prevent accidents, they have already helped to reduce the severity of injuries since installation started in late 2002, officials said, and only three occurred last year.

"We are pleased the numbers are going down," said Ziegler, adding that all new buses the CTA purchases will be equipped with the devices. (Chicago Tribune - Getting About October 6, 2003)

The "100-percent" design plan for the expansion of the Fullerton L stop was recently submitted to the CTA, and with it, Lincoln Parkers will definitely lose two of their local treasures: Demon Dogs and the Hayes-Healy Gymnasium.

All is not completely lost, however. Some of the Hayes-Healy building's decorative façade will be incorporated into the interior of the new L station, according to Chuck Eastwood, spokesman for Ald. Vi Daley (43rd).

According to Judy Casey, first vice president and planning chair of the Sheffield Neighborhood Association, in total, about 4,500 square feet of Hayes-Healy will be used in the new station's interior. Both decorative elements such as a tennis racket, along with flat masonry pieces, will be incorporated into the new station's interior walls, and the masonry could possibly be incorporated into the interior of the Belmont static house.

And as for Demon Dogs, which is on Fullerton Avenue under the L stop, owner Peter Schivarelli said that if he can find a suitable spot within a half-block of the new station, he will consider reopening his renowned hot-dog stand.

Both Hayes-Healy and Demon Dogs are being razed so that the Fullerton station can be modernized, restored, expanded and made ADA compliant. Under the plan, the platforms will be extended to accommodate eight cars, and widened elevators and escalators will be installed: the station will be fully accessible and will include audio and visual signs, Braille signs, tactile warning edges, accessible turnstiles, windbreaks, heaters, benches, and an information kiosk.

The plan also calls for: preserving and moving the historic station house across the street to the north side of Fullerton; a translucent canopy; some sort of glass blocks or laminated glass to be embedded in the platform floors to allow for more light on the street below; and a clear and direct flow to trains. (Lerner Skyline October 16, 2003)