



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.

• DECEMBER OSA MEETING

The next regular meetings of the Omnibus Society of America will be on December 5, 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, "Slides from the camera of Richard Kunz" will be a presentation given by David Stanley

• OSA ELECTION.

Enclosed with this issue of The Green Pennant Special you will find a ballot for the annual election of Directors to the Omnibus Society of America Board.

There are two positions up for election and three members running to fill the two spots. Please vote for only two members, if more than two names are listed, your ballot will be voided.

You can either mail your ballot to the OSA PO Box, or bring it along to the December OSA meeting. Either way, your ballot must be received by 7:30 p.m. on December 5, 2003, to be counted.

• CTA HAPPENINGS

As a continuation to the story in the November 2003 issue of GPS on the rebuilding of the Fullerton stop for the Brown Line rehabilitation, preservationists have been diligently trying to find a way to save DePaul University's circa 1929, three-story Gothic Hayes-Healy building, which is part of the Sheffield Neighborhood Historic

District. DePaul officials have said in the past that Hayes-Healy has "outlived its usefulness."

Alternate plans that would save the property were presented to the CTA, and the fact that Hayes-Healy won't be salvaged is "outrageous," according to David Bahlman, president of the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois.

"It's an extraordinary loss," said Bahlman, who attended numerous planning meetings on the \$476 million Brown Line expansion plans. "And to include bits and pieces into the new building adds insult to injury. That's not preservation."

Bahlman said his organization had hoped that the CTA would revise its plans, and that "Despite claims they were doing something, they did nothing." He said the CTA didn't listen when presented with other options, which included changing the track reconfiguration and keeping the building. (Chicago Tribune)

On November 10, 2003, the Chicago Transit Board approved an amended version of the proposed 2004 budget, which includes a 25-cent increase to the base fare. The CTA has not had a fare increase since 1991. Starting January 1, the base fare will increase to \$1.75, however, the cost of a transfer will decrease to 25 cents, down from the current rate of 30 cents, and the current transfer policy will remain unchanged. Prices will not change on 1-day, 7-day and 30-day passes.

Transit Board members voted to keep reverse transfers that allow customers two additional rides on the rail or bus system within two hours of a transfer being issued, regardless of direction. The decision came as a result of comments from CTA customers throughout the extended public comment period.

CTA Chairman Carole Brown also announced that the CTA board would open its regular meetings to public comment, and would hold additional hearings next year in neighborhoods throughout the CTA service area.

In addition to preserving the transfer policy, as part of the approved budget the board added an additional reduction of \$2.5 million in operating expenses that will be achieved through a combination of cost-savings measures and further reducing the number of non-service related positions.

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CTA

Under the 2004 budget, the 10 percent bonus will continue to apply to Transit Cards only until a similar bonus is available through the new Chicago Card Plus™, which is expected to be available to customers in early 2004. Beginning January 1, 2004, the \$5 fee to purchase the Chicago Card™ and the Chicago Card Plus will be waived until March 31, allowing customers to take advantage of the improved capability of the Chicago Card Plus without the initial cost. The Board also directed that customers in the Transit Benefit program be able to access the Chicago Card Plus as soon as is practicable.

The Chicago card Plus will allow customers to automatically add more value to their cards via credit or debit cards when the balance runs low. The Chicago card Plus will also be used in the Transit Benefit program, increasing the ease with which businesses can participate in this cost-saving program.

As Part of the approved budget, the board also directed that Chicago Cards be distributed more effectively to neighborhoods throughout the service area by expanding distribution to additional retail outlets. In 2002, the CTA introduced the Chicago Card, a touch-and-go electronic farecard designed to provide more efficient service by improving boarding on buses and trains, as well as providing fare balance protection, a four-year use life and greater durability than magnetic strip cards.

A study to explore incorporating Chicago Card technology into the City of Chicago's plan to enable credit card use in taxis for the benefit of paratransit customers who participate in CTA's Taxi Access program was also added to the approved budget. (www.transitchicago.com)

• PACE PATTERN

Pace officials want DuPage County to create a new tax to fund bus routes. Without it, service will stagnate, at best, or drop off dramatically if the economy fails to rebound quickly, Pace officials say.

"We are going to be in a world of hurt in 2005," said John Case, Pace Chairman. "Expect major cutbacks in routes."

Declining sales tax revenue and layoffs that keep riders off the buses have hurt the suburban bus service. Officials will have to use \$7.5 million of Pace's \$8.8

million reserves to meet expenses projected in 2004 without cutting routes or raising fares. "If things don't turn around, and quickly, things will get very bad," said Thomas Marcucci, Pace board member.

Officials plan to study where nonservice-related cuts can be made in hopes of bridging the budget shortfall expected in 2005, but there's no guarantee the cost savings will be enough.

"We can't generate the funds under the present system to provide meaningful transportation to DuPage County," Case said. "That is something the county must do."

Pace officials suggest the county create a special service tax for areas serviced by the routes or a per household tax. Pace does not have the legislative power to levy the tax just for bus service.

Case fears proposals in Springfield to consolidate the toll roads, Metra, CTA and Pace under one department will send even more of the sales tax revenue the transportation groups share to Chicago.

County board members are in the midst of budget talks and could move forward with a new tax, but that is unlikely.

County board Chairman Robert Schillerstrom already plans to cut 49 percent of the Paratransit program budget serving senior citizens and the physically disabled. He also has proposed budget service reductions in the Transit to Work program for developmentally disabled adults. (Daily Herald October 30, 2003)

Pace has hired Michael Bolton as its new Deputy Executive Director of Strategic Services. Bolton filled the high-level position that was previously held by Gerri Scott, who retired last year. Bolton started his new job on October 13, and oversees Pace's Planning Services, Customer relations, Product Development, and Marketing & Communications.

Although Bolton is the new guy on the block at Pace, he is anything but new to the job of reshaping an agency's strategy to achieve a greater level of success. He most recently worked as Vice President of Business Improvement for ATC in Oak Brook, Illinois. He directed efforts to pinpoint significant savings to improve ATC's operating efficiency nationwide. Bolton previously served for three years as general manager at the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority in Austin, Texas, and nine years as executive director at the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority in Michigan.

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PACE

Under Bolton's leadership in Ann Arbor, the management team developed the first Smart Bus specifications in the nation, and introduced the country's first low-floor buses in regular transit service.

Pace passed a \$147.3 million budget on Wednesday, 12, 2003, without service cuts or fare increases for 2004, despite declining ridership and funding.

While avoiding the sort of rate increases the Chicago Transit Authority imposed Monday to handle shortfalls, Pace board members warned that service cuts and fare increases could be a year away.

"Essentially we've got one year to get our plan ready to deal with the problem that hits in 2005," said Terrance Brannon, deputy executive director of Pace.

In part, the problem stems from funding cuts by the Regional Transportation Authority, the oversight and planning agency for Pace, Metra and the CTA. The RTA reduced Pace funding by 4.5 percent, to \$79.1 million, for 2004. The cuts return funding to 2002 levels and will remain in effect through 2006.

The 2004 Pace budget increased 6.2 percent over 2003 in part because of rising health-care, pension and insurance costs. Officials used federal grants to help fill a \$7.8 million shortfall.

Transportation officials blame the sluggish economy for the decreased funding. Sales revenues, which help fund public transportation, have been down.

But Pace ridership has dropped too. It fell 3.7 percent in 2003, a trend officials expect will continue next year. Officials say regional layoffs and fare increases have kept some riders away.

Despite that, Pace officials said they would consider amending the 2004 budget at their December 3 meeting to lower the cost of a transfer fare to 25 cents from 30 cents, to mirror the CTA. The CTA lowered the transfer fare but also raised the base fare 25 cents to \$1.75, effective January 1. The CTA is facing a \$30 million shortfall in its 2004 operating budget of \$936.6 million.

Pace officials said the funding cuts, as well as increases in fuel and insurance costs have forced them to plan for a major restructuring in 2005. (Chicago Tribune November 13, 2003)

Effective Sunday, November 23, Pace implemented service improvements on Routes 352 Halsted and 359 Robbins/South Kedzie. The changes were to eliminate unproductive segments of the routes and improve schedule reliability. The modifications are Phase I of a project to improve transit in the South Halsted corridor, which is part of Pace's expansive Vision 2020 plan.

Adjustments to weekday service on Route 352 include all southbound evening express trips being extended to the Chicago Heights Terminal instead of ending at 170/Wood. The weekday routing to and from the Chicago Heights Terminal was modified to operate via Chicago Road and 16th Street. The extension of selected rush-hour trips via 127th, Ashland and Vermont will no longer be operated.

Adjustments to weekend service on Route 359 Robbins/South Kedzie include all trips operating on Central Park between 135th and 139th, and on 139th between Central Park and Claire in Robbins. All weekend trips will end at Stonebridge/Kedzie in Hazel Crest. Weekend trips will also be adjusted to operate at regular hourly intervals, and running times will be changed to reflect current travel times.

Phase II of the South Halsted project includes a public outreach effort, with riders and south suburban residents providing input on additional transit improvements that will be implemented in that corridor next year. A public meeting was held November 13, in Harvey to gather comments and suggestions. (www.pacebus.com)

Pace introduced a new bus route on Monday, November 24, to bring more employees to the busy UPS facility in Addison. Route 394 Northwest Chicago/UPS Addison becomes the second Pace route serving that UPS site on Lombard Road.

Pace route 394 provides weekday trips between UPS in Addison and the corner of Milwaukee and Lawrence Avenues in Chicago, near the Northwestern Business College. The route's starting point in the city is also near the Jefferson Park CTA and Metra stations. The new route passes Wright Junior College and Triton College, and the bus will pick up passengers anywhere along the route where it is safe to do so. Route 394 will serve employees of the evening shift who arrive in Addison at 5:30 p.m. and depart the facility at 9:45 p.m.

UPS identified the need for additional public transportation to its Addison location, and is funding 75 percent of the operating cost. (Cont. on page 4)

PACE

The one-way fare is just \$1.50, and frequent riders can pay even less by taking advantage of Pace's Commuter Club Card, the Pace/CTA 30-Day Pass, or a Pace 10-Ride Plus Ticket.

Route 394 joins Pace Route 393 in serving the UPS in Addison. Route 393 provides weekday transportation from the near west suburbs of Melrose Park, Forest Park and Oak Park. (www.pacebus.com)

• METRA MATTERS

Metra officials promise crews will return to begin the final leg of work on the long-stalled Hyde Park Station Rehabilitation Project. Workers will first to return to the Hyde Park Boulevard, 47th and 57th Street stations to make repairs and complete work at the stations, and Metra planners say they hope to have a new general contractor onboard and ready to restart work on the final leg of the project at the 53rd and 55th Street stations by the beginning of October.

If all goes according to plan, the \$15.15 million rehab should be completed by the beginning of next year.

Metra has negotiated a takeover of the Hyde Park station project with its bonding company, in which work will resume at the neighborhood's rail stations in two parts. Metra Director of Technical Services Clayton Weaver says that punchlist work - things that are broken or not working properly and must be fixed at the completion of construction - is expected to begin the week of September 25. He added that last week Metra had crews out prepping the remaining construction sites at 53rd and 55th Street for the resumption of work.

The second phase of the process, Weaver said is the selection of a new general contractor to complete the job. The 53rd and 55th Street stations have sat idle since the project's general contractor filed for bankruptcy. According to Weaver, plans for the remaining work have already been circulated to potential contractors and the bonding company hopes to have the job re-bid by the start of October. Once the general contractor is in place, Weaver says the goal will be to finish as soon as possible,

Originally scheduled for completion in the spring of 2001, the project has been beset from the start by a series of cascading delays ranging from design errors and weather delays to the eventual bankruptcy of the project's general contractor, A.E. Berg Construction.

A double headed Metra train carrying more than 300 passengers derailed Sunday afternoon, October 12, on the city's South Side, leaving 45 injured - six critically - and left one locomotive on its side and in flames, officials said.

Metra officials did not immediately know what caused the derailment, which occurred at 47th Street near the Dan Ryan Expressway on the Rock Island line's Train No. 519, en route from Chicago's downtown LaSalle Street station to Joliet.

Many of the passengers included runners on their way back from the Chicago Marathon, their race numbers still pinned to their shirts.

The second locomotive ended up perpendicular to the tracks and five commuter cars were derailed. Metra crews worked overnight to remove the damaged cars and repair the tracks, which Metra's Pardonnet said had some "pretty severe damage."

As the cars began to lean over before derailing, one of the rear cars sideswiped the brick exterior of a Metra maintenance building used to clean the commuter cars, knocking down bricks and paneling. (Chicago Tribune October 13, 2003)

Responding to nature's call and commuter's upset about poor amenities aboard Electric line trains, the Metra board voted on Tuesday 15 to equip 26 new Highliner cars with restrooms.

The new coaches - the first new trains on the former Illinois Central line to the south suburbs from downtown in more than 30 years - are being built in Japan and will arrive in 2005 and 2006, according to Metra Executive Director Philip Pagano.

The Electric is the only Metra route that does not have toilets on the trains. Customers have long complained that Metra customers in the north and western suburbs are treated to more comfortable trains and nicer stations than their counterparts on the South Side and south suburbs.

The 26 new Highliner cars will cost Metra \$37 million, officials said. Installing toilets is estimated to cost an additional \$150,000 per car, Pagano said, adding he hoped to negotiate a lower price with the manufacturers.

The agency plans to buy a total of 160 Highliner cars through 2008 at an estimated cost of \$410 million, officials said.

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METRA

When the current Electric fleet of trains is replaced, there will be at least one restroom on every train, but not inside every car. Officials estimated that 60 percent of the new cars would be restroom-equipped.

The new Highliners are not compatible with the existing Electric line trains, so none of the 26 new cars containing toilets in the initial purchase will be coupled with the older trains.

Officials said they eventually would need to buy more trains for the Electric fleet, in part because the restrooms require the removal of 16 seats in each car.

Metra also faces the future need to build a new maintenance facility, perhaps at the end of the line in University Park, to service the new trains and restrooms, which must be emptied and cleaned at least once a week. (Chicago Tribune October 15, 2003)

Officials from eight communities with a stake in the proposed \$1.1 billion suburb-to-suburb rail line gathered in Naperville on Wednesday, November 12, to hash out potential development plans surrounding each proposed depot.

Community representatives received at least two different land-use plans for each depot on the proposed STAR, or Suburban Transit Access Route, Line and some got three plans for some spots.

With input from community leaders and surrounding government agencies, the 10 depots between Hoffman Estates and Joliet will each have different development characteristics depending on the destination. Community officials were brought together to ensure land uses were synchronized and not necessarily duplicated, officials said.

In Naperville, a stop that would allow Metra riders on the Burlington Northern east/west route to assess the new commuter line has officials talking about shuttering the current stop at Route 59.

Naperville Councilman Doug Krause suggested a "mega station" at the proposed Eola Road depot during talks between the Naperville contingent and STAR planners. The Naperville group also mulled over three options for a southern stop along an extended 95th Street that incorporated several different combinations of residential and commercial developers.

Each group spent about an hour discussing variations on the ideas they were presented and then outlined their concerns and alternatives to the whole gathering.

Each town has different goals for its depot.

While Warrenville is trying to keep development near its proposed depot to a minimum, West Chicago officials are anticipating a great deal of development around the city's two proposed stops. Some in the West Chicago group were awed by an ambitious overpass plan from the downtown stop that allows motorists to bypass a busy train crossing on Washington Street. (Daily Herald November 13, 2003)

Metra began deactivating the fare-collection turnstiles at downtown stations on the Electric Line on Tuesday, November 18, minutes after the commuter rail agency's board voted to remove the equipment.

Access gates used by disabled Metra passengers were also being unlocked to facilitate easier boarding, officials said.

The turnstiles, which have operated for several decades at about 30 stations on the line between downtown and University Park, were to be dismantled by Monday, November 24, 2003, Metra officials said.

Metra will hire up to 10 more conductors to collect fares and punch tickets on Electric Line trains, the agency said.

Electric Line riders for years have objected to the turnstiles, which are deployed on no other Metra routes. They said the existence of the turnstiles created the perception that Metra doesn't trust its Electric Line customers to pay their fares.

Commuters also complained that they frequently missed trains because of malfunctioning turnstile equipment. (Chicago Tribune November 18, 2003)

• OTHER NEWS

The hundreds of thousands of subway passengers trapped for hours on the New York City subways August 14 in the largest North American blackout take note: One day subways could run independently of the electricity grid.

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OTHER NEWS

The Denver-based Fuelcell Propulsion Institute plans to convert a 120-ton diesel locomotive into a fuel cell driven train, a project that could make fuel cells a reality for subways.

Subway officials from New York, Denver and London are providing guidance for the project, funded by the U.S. Army and the National Automotive Center in Michigan.

"Subway systems running on the grid is obviously a precarious proposition," said Arnold Miller, spokesman for the five year project. "Fuel cell subways would not be dependent on the grid."

Miller said another participant in the project, Texas-based BNSF Railway, spends \$1 billion a year in diesel costs for its heavy freight rail. He said fuel cells could lower that bill by 20 percent. (Chicago Tribune Online Edition/ Reuters November 16, 2003)

A Chicago man who is paralyzed from the waist down filed a federal lawsuit on September 30, 2003, against the Chicago Trolley Co. to require that more trolleys are made wheelchair-accessible.

According to the suit, the "vast majority" of trolleys in the fleet are not wheelchair-accessible, a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The suit alleges that "most, if not all" of the vehicles were built after the act was effective.

The plaintiff, Anthony Cotton, is not seeking monetary damages but wants Chicago Trolley to replace the vehicles that are not wheelchair-accessible with ones that are, said his attorney, Steven Greenberger of the DePaul University College of Law Disability Rights Clinic.

The trolleys connect downtown tourist destinations. Ross Avery, general manager of the trolley company, had no comment on the suit. (Chicago Tribune October 1, 2003)

- CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

In cooperation with the various rail and transit enthusiast organizations meeting in Chicago, we present this "Calendar of Events".

Dec. 12. Chicago Chapter – Railway & Locomotive Historical Society meeting. 7:00pm. The Chicago Temple (77 W. Washington – Pierce Hall (lower level auditorium). Admission is free. Program – ***"To be announced."***

Dec. 19. The Railroad Club of Chicago meeting. 7:30pm. The Chicago Temple (77 W. Washington – Pierce Hall (lower level auditorium). Donation of \$3.00 requested for non-members. Program – ***"To be announced."***

Dec. 26. Central Electric Railfans' Association meeting. 7:30pm. 205 W. Wacker Drive Suite 200 (Securities Training Corp). \$5.00 admission for non-members. Program – a 1986 feature movie, Malcolm, provided by Jeff Wien. An Australian film about a shy but genius tram worker whose technical expertise gets him into trouble.

An online version of our Calendar of Events is available, courtesy of the Shore Line Interurban Historical Society, at www.shore-line.org/calendar.html