



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

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.

The Omnibus Society of America is happy to unveil its new website "www.osabus.com". At osabus.com we will be posting upcoming fan trips and meetings information, as well as membership information.

Please visit our site when you have a chance and give us your opinions and comments.

• JANUARY OSA MEETING

The next regular meetings of the Omnibus Society of America will be on January 7, 2005, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2751 W. Winona Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The meeting will 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, "Through the Lens of Myron Lane", will be a slide presentation of rail and transit subjects taken by respected photographer Myron Lane.

TWO OSA MEMBERS PASS AWAY

By Ray DeGroot

The Omnibus Society lost two long-time members in October and November with the deaths of Tom Carpenter, OSA #29, and Charlie Thompson, OSA #10.

Thomas Allan Carpenter died on October 21, 2004, at the age of 69, after suffering from both lung and brain cancer. A native Chicagoan, born on July 13, 1935, and a long-time resident of the Lake View area, Tom graduated from Lake View High School in 1953. He formed his own graphics art business in the Loop, producing advertising art for the Chicago Tribune and numerous clients. From this he secured a job at the Tribune which was embracing

the newest technology in computer programs for art work. He served six years in the Naval Reserve from 1956 to 1962. During that time he continued his studies at night and in 1961 was granted the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts by the University of Chicago. He belonged to several Masonic organizations. Active in many railfan groups, he assisted in the production of four CERA Bulletins including "TM" in 1972, "Iowa Trolleys" in 1974, and the two rapid transit books issued at that time. Tom's controller-handle design is still used by CERA today. Besides being a railfan, Tom was a historian and recently became a docent at the Terra Museum of Modern Art after an intensive course in art history. Tom served on the OSA Board of Directors as treasurer for four years from 1997 to 2000. He is survived by his wife, Mary, and daughters Nancy and Cathy and their husbands and family.

Charles A. Thompson, Jr., died in Phoenix, AZ on November 24, 2004, after suffering from bone cancer. He was 70, having been born in Chicago on October 5, 1934. Charlie, as he was known to most OSA members, graduated from Lane Tech High School and served in the army in a military police unit in Japan. He was employed for many years by the Santa Fe Railway in their tariff compiling and distribution section. He was a member of CERA and other railfan groups, and became an early OSA member as evidenced by his low number. He is survived by his wife, Donna, their son having died several years ago.

• CTA HAPPENINGS

On December 16th, the CTA Board voted to delay the massive service cuts and layoffs that had been planned to go into effect on January 1, 2005, for at least six months so Illinois lawmakers have time to come up with more transit cash.

CTA boss Frank Kruesi and board president Carole Brown have said it would take a "strong commitment" from legislative leaders to put off the so-called gridlock budget.

And that's what they got from Senate President Emil Jones (D-Chicago), who told the Sun-Times saving the Chicago Transit Authority will be his "top legislative priority" next year. He wanted the CTA to postpone the cuts until the General Assembly can act in the spring.

Adam Kerman reports the board passed a "balanced budget" with the service cuts backloaded until the end of the year. The RTA board then cancelled its meeting, rescheduling it from the December 17th to Thursday, January 6, 2005 to review the CTA budget. (Cont on page 2)

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CTA

Also, CTA did not make the \$130 million in capital cuts ordered by the RTA in reaction to the assumption that the state legislature will not authorize new transportation bonds. RTA staffers hint that likely the entire bus purchase will be cancelled as that's a big ticket item. That in turn has negative implications for the operating budget as several series of buses that have high maintenance costs will not be retired.

The CTA board made no hard decisions, supposedly after a private conversation between Mayor Daley and Carole Brown when Mayor Daley told her not to go along with the service cut plans as reported to the Chicago Sun-Times by sources.

If the legislature does not come up with some type of finding package to help fund transportation in the six-county RTA area by the middle of the year, instead of the CTA cutting service by 20%, they will probably have to implement cuts of 40%, which would have an extremely negative impact on CTA service levels.

This is almost like the last RTA funding crisis where many of the outlying suburban properties had to shut down when RTA funding dried up. (Chicago Sun-Times December 15, 2004)

The Chicago Transit Board on December 6, 2004, authorized the sale of property at the Chicago Transit Authority's Wilson Yard to the City of Chicago at the market rate price of \$6.6 million. The City of Chicago will, in turn, sell the property to a developer to develop the rail yard into a multi-use facility that will include retail space and mixed income housing. The \$6.6 million sale adds revenue to the CTA's operating budget.

The 164,000 square foot property is located between Wilson and Montrose Avenues on Chicago's North Side just east of the CTA's Red Line tracks. The property currently contains a CTA maintenance shop and outdoor storage areas. The CTA does not need the property to conduct regular CTA operations.

CTA will retain permanent easement rights necessary in order to have access for activities related to operations and maintenance of Red Line service and track structure. The maintenance shop and storage areas will be relocated to other CTA property.

In addition to the sale of the property, the CTA has agreed to pay up to \$750,000 for environmental remediation of the property. The money will come out of

the sale of the property and be held in escrow to assist the City and the developer. (www.yourcta.com December 6, 2004)

The CTA's ambitious \$483 million Blue Line Cermak branch rehabilitation project has given CTA customers eight, newly renovated, fully accessible stations, a faster, smoother ride and, beginning Saturday, January 1, 2005, additional service on weekends and weekdays.

The rehabilitation project on this branch, which began in 2001, will be completed in late January. The station work and majority of the track work has been completed allowing customers to enjoy the state-of-the-art station and platform amenities, and faster trips that get customers to the Loop in 25 minutes or less instead of the 45 minutes it took prior to reconstruction.

Service will run every 15 minutes on Saturday from 4:00 am until 1:00 am., and every 20 minutes on Sunday from 4:00 am until 1:00 am. On weekdays, service hours will be extended until 1:00 am., instead of 12:45 am. In order to achieve the additional weekend service for the Cermak branch, the CTA will alternate trains between the Forest Park branch and the Cermak branch. The schedule on the Forest Park branch will be adjusted to accommodate less frequent service during those hours.

Eight stations – 54th/Cermak, Kostner, Pulaski, Central Park, Kedzie, California, Western and Damen – were renovated as part of the rehabilitation project and track and support structure was replaced, and a new signal communications system installed. All 11 stations on the Cermak branch are now accessible to customers with disabilities. Three stations, Polk, 18th Street and Cicero, were already accessible.

Prior to the rehabilitation, the more than 100 year-old steel structure that supported the elevated portion of the Cermak branch was well beyond its useful life. Despite efforts to maintain the system, the overall condition had deteriorated to a point that permanent slow zones were present throughout more than half of the track. Slow zones required trains to operate as slow as 15 mph instead of the normal 55 mph. A trip from 54th/Cermak to downtown could take as long as 45 minutes before construction began.

The Blue Line rehabilitation project was funded through a Full Funding Grant Agreement with the federal government and locally through Illinois FIRST, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

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CTA

The Cermak (Douglas) branch is 6.6 miles long and provides rapid transit service to Pilsen, Heart of Chicago, Little Village, Lawndale and the town of Cicero. It serves as a vital link to the Chicago Loop and the Illinois Medical District.

The Blue Line is the CTA's second busiest rail line after the Red Line. In September 2004, a total of 133,376 rides were taken on an average weekday with 10,236 of those rides provided on the Cermak branch.
(www.yourcta.com December 22, 2004)

• PACE PATTERN

The Pace Board of Directors received an update on Ride DuPage, the new transit program implemented on July 1 in the western suburbs. Ride DuPage pools paratransit services previously operated and dispatched by different private and public organizations, allowing individuals to call one phone number, staffed by a Pace contractor, to access a multitude of transportation options in DuPage County.

Pace currently contracts with one bus company, and one taxi operator, and assigns trip requests to them on a low-cost formula basis. In the program's first five months, Ride DuPage has grown 174 percent to 6,220 trips in November. Buses operated 62 percent of the trips, while taxis provided service 38 percent of the time.

Pace is working with county officials to identify what additional partners should be added to expand the program. Also, Pace will move forward in early 2005 with the implementation of Mobile Data and Automatic Vehicle Location technology, which is the paratransit equivalency to Pace's fixed-route Intelligent Bus System.

The technology will provide instantaneous transmission of schedule changes, and exact pick-up and drop-off times to improve productivity. Vehicle locations will be monitored throughout the day, allowing for better documentation to address service issues.

Pace carried more than 2.9 million passengers in November, achieving a 13.7 ridership increase compared to the same month last year. Part of the increase was due to November 2004 having two more weekdays than November 2003. Another factor was Pace's recent fare integration with the CTA. Passengers are now able to use any CTA pass on Pace buses, resulting in seamless

trips for the thousands of people who ride both systems every day.

Pace's popular Vanpool Incentive Program (VIP) experienced a 29 percent ridership increase in November as its passenger count jumped from 96,000 to 124,000. There are 480 vans on the road every day in the Pace VIP, ranking as the second-largest public vanpool program in the nation.

From January through November, the Pace system carried 31.5 million passengers, which is 1.6 percent more than Pace served last year during the 11-month period.

Due to a lack of funding and ridership, Pace Route 558 "The Hot Line" Route 59 Corridor will be eliminated after its last trip on Friday, December 31. The bus operates during weekday rush hours between the Bartlett Metra Station and the Prairie Stone development in Hoffman Estates.

The Prairie Stone Transportation Management Association decided to discontinue its subsidy in 2005. Without that funding, the route will not meet minimum ridership standards.

A public hearing was held December 1 at Sears Headquarters at Prairie Stone, where Pace outlined cost-effective transit options such as vanpools and other bus routes. These alternatives will satisfy the needs of existing Route 558 passengers. (Pace December Board meeting)

Although bus route improvements in the North Shore area won't hit the streets until March, one Pace route was adjusted on Monday, December 6, as part of Pace's comprehensive North Shore Initiative. Route 226 Oakton Street began offering new service to downtown Des Plaines on weekdays.

From Oakton Street, the Route 226 bus loops through downtown Des Plaines using Busse Highway, Miner Street and Lee Street/Manheim Road. This improvement not only allows the bus to serve additional businesses and the Des Plaines Metra Station, it also offers passengers convenient connections to other Pace routes. Route 226 riders now have the opportunity to transfer near the Des Plaines Metra Station to Pace Route 208 Church Street/Golf Road, 209 Golf Road/Woodfield, 220 Glenview/Des Plaines/O'Hare Airport, 230 South Des Plaines, 234 Wheeling/Des Plaines and 250 Dempster Street.

Route 226 runs from the Jefferson Park Metra and CTA stations to the corner of Oakton and Diane streets in Mount Prospect.

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PACE

Pace's restructuring of bus routes in the North Shore region is part of the agency's Vision 2020 plan, which is generating significant improvements to the way public transit is provided in Chicago's suburbs.

The North Shore Initiative includes adjustments to 13 routes serving Evanston, Lincolnwood, Skokie, Wilmette and surrounding towns. The restructured service will result in less transferring, faster trips, and less duplication of service. More information about the North Shore Initiative is available on Pace's website at www.pacebus.com. (www.pacebus.com December 3, 2004)

Pace, the suburban transit agency, adjusted Route 835 in the southwest suburbs on Monday, December 20, to serve the new Palos Heights Metra Station at 11451 Southwest Highway. Pace made this change based on a request from Metra to serve the Palos Heights station when it opened for rail service that day. Pace service to the new station replaces current service to the Palos Heights courtesy stop at 127th Street and Harlem Avenue.

Pace Route 835 Southwest Service provides weekday trips between Orland Park and Chicago's Loop. The route serves suburban stations along Metra's Southwest Service line, thereby supplementing the train service. The bus fare is based on the Metra fare schedule.

The new Palos Heights Metra Station features more than 500 parking spaces, each available at the daily rate of \$1.25. There are also heated waiting areas for bus and rail passengers. Bus stops are located next to the train platform and in the lower parking lot to the south of the entrance drive. Bus stop signs have been posted.

The new train station will be served by all morning trips of Route 835, but afternoon trips will only stop at the station by request to the bus operator. Buses will stop at the station at the times they currently serve the bus stop at 127th Street and Harlem Avenue, which will be eliminated. The scheduled stop times at other points along Route 835 will not change. (www.pacebus.com December 15, 2004)

- CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

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

Jan 14. 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"*.

Jan 21. 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 - *"Slides from the Bill Robertson Collection"*.

Jan 28. Central Electric Railfans' Association meeting. 7:30pm. 205 W. Wacker Drive Suite 200. Admission is free. Program - *"Video movies comparing the interurban railroad operations of Milwaukee and Vancouver"*, by Jeff Wien.

Feb 5. Kenosha Streetcar Society meeting. Chili dinner at 6:00pm Members \$5.00, Non Members \$10.00 Program following at 7:00pm. Slides by Erik Bryant of Kenosha PCC's, Skokie Swift under wire, South Shore Line and from his collection, original slides of Milwaukee Electric Railway and Transport Co, North Shore, South Shore and Pittsburgh PCC's.

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