

# Green Pennant Special

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC. FEBRUARY 2005

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](http://www.osabus.com)". At [osabus.com](http://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.

## • FEBRUARY OSA MEETING

The next regular meetings of the Omnibus Society of America will be on February 4, 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 John LeBeau**", will be a slide presentation of rail and transit subjects taken by respected photographer John LeBeau.

## • CTA HAPPENINGS

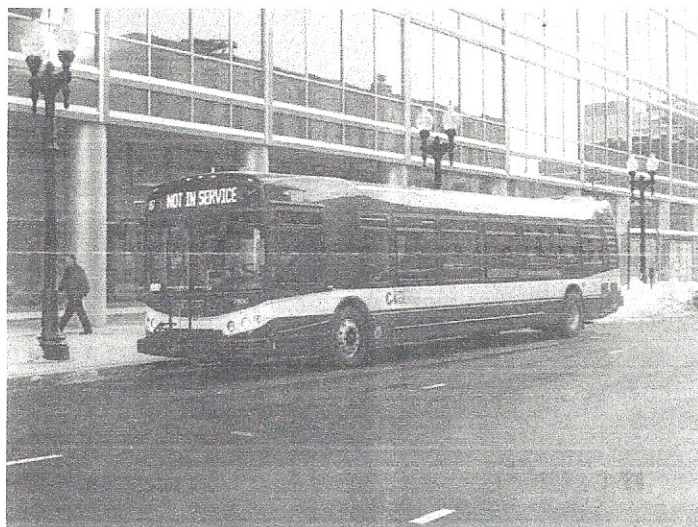
**The CTA has received its first CompoBus model from North American Bus Industries (NABI). The CTA had ordered 1 bus, with an option for 24 additional models.**

The CompoBus is made of a single piece glass fiber reinforced composite body, rather than traditional steel. CompoBus models are lighter weight than steel buses, thus making operations of the bus easier by reducing brake and wear. Additionally, the bodies of CompoBus models are entirely impervious to corrosion; therefore, the regular preventive maintenance against corrosion is unnecessary.

The new CompoBus is unique for CTA in other ways. It is the first bus to sport a modified paint scheme along with a new type of seating design.

The new paint scheme, while utilizing the same colors as the previous, uses red as a dominant color. The middle portion of the bus contains a strip of white, with blue at the bottom.

The CompoBus also uses a new seating design from the local-based Freedman Seating Company. The model chosen by the CTA, the Citi Pro, was installed on a Nova LFS in late 2003 as an experiment. The seats are much slimmer and lighter weight than the previous generation of CTA bus seats. They feature the same low pile plush insert typically used by CTA along with a stainless steel back. ([ChicagoBus.org](http://ChicagoBus.org))



Per Bruce Moffat, "Attached is a photo of the CTA "CompoBus" bus. It arrived on the property last Tuesday (January 18) and made unannounced trips out of Archer over the weekend. Here it is in front of CTA's headquarters on Monday January 24. The bus is variously numbered 7800 (on the outside) and 7690 (on the inside). Bus Engineering says that this bus will be coming to CTA as part of the deliveries whenever they start. Following two weeks here, the bus goes to Thermoking for HVAC testing.

**After surveying the market** for a small quantity of narrow, accessible buses that it could put into service quickly and inexpensively while it awaits the purchase and manufacture of new buses, the Chicago Transit Authority Board on January 12, 2005, approved the purchase of 13 narrow, lift-equipped, air-conditioned buses previously owned by Pace.

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## CTA

The addition of these buses to the CTA fleet will enable the CTA to make 100 percent of its 152 bus routes fully accessible to people with disabilities. The buses will be used on CTA bus routes #170, #171, #172 and #173 that serve the University of Chicago campus in Hyde Park. These are the only CTA routes currently not accessible.

Like the 1991 TMC's currently used on these routes, the 40-foot long, 96-inch wide Orion buses – owned by Pace and manufactured in 1990 – are narrower than a standard 102-inch wide bus and better able to navigate on side streets. Because of the lighter duty and less wear and tear, they are in much better condition to serve CTA bus customers than the TMC buses. The TMC's have endured a more severe service environment having been subjected to heavier loads, more frequent stops and more congested traffic.

The purchase price will not exceed \$5,500 per bus for a total sum not to exceed \$71,500. The contract was not competitively bid, as it was determined to be disadvantageous to do so. Also, regulations governing purchase and sales transactions state that contracts between units of government are not subject to a competitive bid process.

The CTA's efforts to make its affordable mainline service more accessible to customers with disabilities include initiatives beyond lifts and ramps. CTA is continuing to install an automated announcement system on its bus fleet that helps visually and hearing impaired customers better navigate the system.

This system features exterior announcements and electronic signs that identify the bus route and its destination when the front doors are opened. It also includes interior announcements and signs identifying the next stop. Currently 95 percent of CTA buses are equipped with this system. By mid 2005 all CTA buses should be equipped with the system.

In addition, CTA is preparing to purchase new narrow, accessible buses that will be specifically designed to accommodate many of the narrow streets in Hyde Park and Future markets yet to be identified. These buses are expected to join the CTA fleet by 2006.  
(www.transitchicago.com)

**With the restoration of weekend service on the newly renovated 54th/Cermak branch of the Chicago Transit Authority's Blue Line, the Chicago Transit Board on January 12, 2005, voted to eliminate duplicate service**

provided by the #X21 Cermak Express bus route effective January 30, 2005.

The #X21 route currently operates between North Riverside Park Mall and McCormick Place on weekends and holidays. CTA created the limited stop route in December 1998 to provide weekend transit service in lieu of Blue Line rail service. Weekend rail service on the branch was added January 1, however, and operates every 15 minutes on Saturday from 4 a.m. until 1 a.m., and every 20 minutes on Sundays from 4 a.m. to 1 a.m. Weekday service hours are 4 a.m. until 1 a.m.

The board also approved a 180-day experiment on the #21 Cermak bus route which will incorporate trips to North Riverside Mall – one of the most popular aspects of the former #X21 Cermak route. Under the experiment, the #21 Cermak bus will extend its run and terminate at the North Riverside Park Mall instead of the rail terminal at 54th/Cermak. Starting January 30, 2005, #21 buses will operate to the mall approximately every 20 minutes from 8 a.m. until 10:30 p.m. on Saturdays and from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m. on Sundays and holidays. Eastbound trips on the #21 will continue to terminate at McCormick Place. (www.transitchicago.com)

**The rehabilitation of the Chicago Transit Authority's historic Wilson station on the Red Line moved closer to reality on January 21, 2005, with the approval of a contract for the design of the station and station house.** The project is expected to introduce modern amenities while preserving the station's historic architectural features. The station was originally constructed in 1900 and is listed as a contributing structure in the Uptown Square Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.

Through a competitive bid process, CTA has named Wilson Transit Associates (WTA) a Joint Venture as the recipient of the \$1.75 million design contract. WTA will provide the CTA three design alternatives for the Wilson station, which will include moving the main entrance to the corner of Broadway and Wilson and creating an auxiliary entrance on the south side of Wilson. The station will be fully accessible to people with disabilities and offer upgraded customer amenities, such as a new platform, signage, overhead heaters and elevators.

WTA a Joint Venture is a partnership between Parsons Transportation Group, Inc., McDonough Associates, Inc., and Architrave, Ltd., of Chicago. Then firm is committed to meeting a 35.6 percent Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goal through the hiring of subcontractors.  
(Cont on page 3)



## CTA

Design work is expected to be completed by the end of 2006. Construction on the new station and track improvements is scheduled to begin no sooner than 2008. ([www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com))

**The Chicago Transit Authority** on Friday, January 28, 2005, announced its plans for station renovations as part of the Brown Line capacity expansion project. In order to stay within the project budget and preserve amenities planned for neighborhood stations, the CTA will implement temporary closures of some Brown Line stations during construction. These closures will allow the CTA to minimize the amount of time construction crews will be present in neighborhoods.

In January, Chicago Transit Board members authorized Chairman Carole Brown to make the final decision on construction options on behalf of the Board in order to meet a January 31 Federal Transit Administration filing deadline.

In May 2004, CTA received construction bids for the project that exceeded the budget, making it necessary to identify \$152 million worth of cost savings. The project was reorganized into several discrete pieces to help attract more competitive construction bids. Signal system upgrades and electrical substation work were successfully re-bid, and work began in fall 2004.

Work on station renovations have been grouped into five separate packages according to location. Pending approval from funding agencies, the first package expected to go out for bid is Belmont/Fullerton. The remaining four packages – Armitage/Sedgwick/ Chicago, Kimball/ Kedzie/ Francisco/Rockwell/ Western, Damen/ Montrose/ Irving Park/ Addison and Paulina/ Southport/ Wellington/ Diversey – will follow.

Planned temporary station closures will save CTA an estimated \$22 million on construction costs. As a result, CTA will be able to keep station modifications to a minimum, focusing largely on non-customer components such as communication rooms and janitor closets to further reduce the overall cost of construction.

Under the current plan, three stations – Fullerton, Belmont and Western – will remain open throughout construction. Maintaining service at these three heavily trafficked stations for the duration will minimize the effect of surrounding temporary station closures.

Armitage, Sedgwick and Chicago will remain open on weekdays. Under the current plan, it will, however, be necessary to concurrently close all three of these southern-most Brown Line stations for up to six weekends during the construction period to allow construction crews unlimited access to station platforms. During these periods, customers will be encouraged to use the most convenient existing CTA bus and rail service in the area.

Damen, Montrose, Irving Park, Addison, Paulina, Southport, Wellington and Diversey will be subject to temporary weekday and weekend closures, with no adjacent stations being closed at the same time. Customers will be encouraged to use the next-closest or most conveniently located station during any given temporary closure.

Kimball, Kedzie, Francisco and Rockwell will be subject to two types of temporary closures. On weekdays and weekends, these stations will experience temporary closures, with no adjacent stations being closed at the same time. In addition, under the current plan, it will be necessary to concurrently close all four of these northern-most Brown Line stations for up to 10 weekends throughout the construction period to allow construction crews access to station platforms. During these periods, customers will be encouraged to use nearby existing CTA bus service.

The project's Full Funding Grant Agreement with the federal government requires that the CTA complete the project by the end of 2009. In a separate agreement, the Federal Transit Administration requires that work to make the Fullerton station accessible be completed by the end of 2008.

The Brown Line capacity expansion project includes: the rehabilitation of 18 Brown Line stations;

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## CTA

Lengthening station platforms to accommodate eight rather than six-car trains; provide for station enhancements to meet the accessibility requirements for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); upgrade or replace traction power; signal and communication equipment; and reduce the number of slow zones on the line.

Work is already underway to upgrade the Brown Line's signal system from Kimball to Western. It involves installing signal equipment along the tracks, installing six new crossing gates and circuitry where the Brown Line crosses at street level at Spaulding, Kedzie, Albany, Sacramento, Francisco and Rockwell, and rehabilitating Kimball tower where signals control switches and direct trains.

At Clark Junction - the location where Brown Purple and Red Line tracks merge just north of the Belmont station - work is being done to install a new signal system from Armitage to Addison, provide signals for 14 rail crossovers and rehabilitate Clark Tower located at the junction. ([www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com))

**On January 28, 2005**, the Chicago Transit Authority issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the manufacture of new railcars. The RFP includes upgraded features as part of the bid criteria such as AC (alternating current) propulsion, security cameras and aisle-facing seats. The RFP calls for a base order of 250 rail cars with additional options that could bring the total purchase to 706 cars. Bids generated from the RFP are expected to be opened in mid-2005, with delivery expected to begin in 2008.

The rail cars will replace older rail cars, some more than 30 years old, such as the 2200-series Budd cars that were purchased in 1969-70, as well as the 2400-series Boeing-Vertol cars purchased in 1976-78. CTA's most recent purchase of new rail cars was in the 1990s when 3200-series cars were purchased for the opening of the Orange Line, and too replace older cars on the Brown and Yellow Lines. Plans for the manufacture of new rail cars are part of long term capital improvement plans to upgrade the quality of CTA's rail and bus fleet.

The RFP specifications call for the new rail cars to run on AC (alternating current) traction motor propulsion. The existing CTA fleet uses DC (direct current) motors to drive trains. AC propulsion converts the DC energy in the third (power) rail to alternating current for the

traction motors. AC propulsion systems are used by transit agencies in New York, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, among others.

Through regeneration, AC propulsion offers power savings. Some of the power used to accelerate the train can be recovered and put back into the power (third) rail when stopping the train. This provides additional power to accelerate other trains and reduces the total amount of energy required to run the system. On trains using DC propulsion systems, the braking energy is dissipated as heat.

In addition to AC propulsion, the CTA's RFP calls for rail cars with an aisle-facing seating configuration. Urban railways in major cities such as New York, Boston, London, Paris and Tokyo use aisle-facing seating to more comfortably accommodate a large volume of passengers, key for systems with heavy customer loads such as the CTA which provides nearly 500,000 rides on its rail system on an average weekday. With the new rail car configuration the CTA will be able to accommodate more customers per rail car and provide a more comfortable trip, a priority for the second largest transit system in the country. Customers carrying backpacks, packages, luggage, strollers and bikes will have more room to maneuver. Additionally, the new configuration allows for one more wheelchair position (two per car) than the current configuration (one per car).

CTA tested aisle-facing seating on two rail cars earlier this year. The reconfigured rail car seating was incorporated in the RFP following observation and analysis, and customer comment. The aisle-facing seating configuration adds six-inches to the narrowest portion of the aisle, more space for standing customers with more support poles and straps in the center of the car, and can accommodate 39 seats (no seats are lost in the reconfiguration). ([www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com))

## • METRA MATTERS

**Metra officials were on hand** December 7, 2004, dedicating three stations in the Hyde Park and Kenwood neighborhoods that were recently rebuilt on the Metra Electric Line from University Park. Other dignitaries participating included Congressman Bobby L. Rush, State Representative Barbara Flynn Currie and Chicago Alderman Leslie Hairston and Toni Preckwinkle.

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## METRA

At a cost of \$15.5 million, this is the most aggressive station project ever undertaken by Metra and includes total replacement of three stations: 55th/56th/57th Street; 51st/53rd Street and 47th Street. The stations – made of brick, steel, concrete and modern composite materials – replace outdated wood platforms constructed in the 1920's by Metra predecessor, Illinois Central. The stations are located about seven miles from the line's terminus at Randolph Street Station. They serve more than 1,200 passengers each weekday.

New amenities include cast composite platforms, brick and glass headhouses, new concrete stairwells and elevator access at 51st Street and 57th Street for customers with disabilities. The 47th Street station received all new deck boards, concrete stairs and a warming house.

The project started in late 2000 but was dogged by geographic and design obstacles. It was significantly delayed at one point due to the bankruptcy of the project's original general contractor. Despite these problems, the stations remained opened through the duration of the project with the exception of 47th Street – it was closed for a few weeks. ([www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com))

**Motorists who travel along Belmont Road in Downers Grove** now can look forward to not having to stop at the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad crossing.

After years of discussion on how to provide additional safety at one of the area's busiest intersection, the \$36 million Belmont Road underpass project is getting closer to reality after a ceremony held December 9, 2004, in Downers Grove brought together all agencies pledging financial support.

Metra and Downers Grove are looking to construct an underpass at the Belmont Road crossing over the next five years. Much of the land for the underpass project has been acquired, important preliminary underpass project work is on-going. Preliminary engineering and the environmental assessment for the project has already been completed. Final engineering is expected to be completed by September, 2005, and a construction contract is to be awarded in early-2006.

The Illinois Commerce Commission will contribute \$12 million for the underpass. The remaining costs would be covered by Metra (\$8.7 million), the Illinois Department of Transportation (\$8.7 million), the Federal

Transportation Administration (\$5.2 million), and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad (\$1.5 million).

With 95 Metra trains, approximately 70 freight trains, and four Amtrak trains daily, traffic congestion can be a common occurrence during the rush hour at the Belmont Road location. The traffic congestion contributes to lost time, increased fuel usage, air pollution, and impacts emergency services.

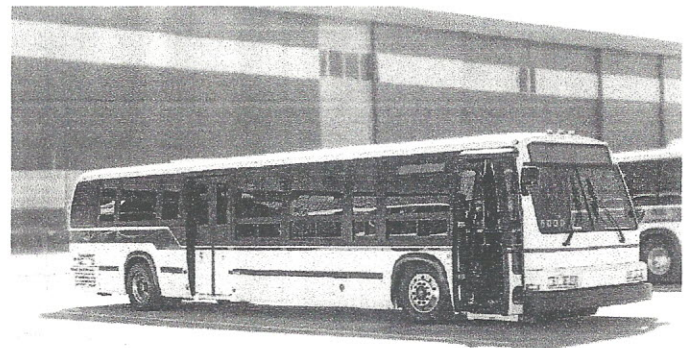
Currently, there are no at-grade separations within the Village of Downers Grove. If the existing railroad crossings are blocked by freight trains, then north-south access is blocked. The separation will eliminate this condition.

An underpass at Belmont Road will greatly improve the flow of traffic around the Belmont train station, facilitate the north-south movement of traffic on Belmont Road, and increase the safety and productivity of both Metra and freight services. The location of the existing commuter station requires significant vehicular turning movements in the area of the current grade crossing. This condition will be greatly improved by the separation of automobile and train movements.

## • TRANSIT HAPPENINGS

In 2004, we carried an article about Millennium Transit Services and their plans on building a low-floor RTS.

Here is a photograph of what appears to be a low-floor RTS demo at Roswell (?), photographed by James Roach, supplied by Jeff Waxman.



Interesting Window treatment.

## - CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

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

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.

Feb. 11. 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”*.

Feb. 18. 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 – *“Pennsylvania Railroad Suburban Service to Hegewisch”*, a slide presentation by William M. Shapotkin.

Feb. 25. Central Electric Railfans' Association meeting. 7:30pm. 205 W. Wacker Drive Suite 200. Admission is free. Program – *“Old Streetcars and new photographic technology”*, How scanning and digital innovations can do wonders to old black and white streetcar photographs, by Terrell Colson.

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](http://www.shore-line.org/calendar.html)

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