



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.

• MAY OSA MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be on May 5, 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 for the evening has not been finalized at this time.

• CTA CORNER

In order to eliminate an anticipated \$55 million deficit, the Chicago Transit Board on April 13th voted to reduce service levels and also raise fares for cash customers and rail customers who pay with a transit card. The changes will be effective July 17. Of the five scenarios under consideration, the Board approved a hybrid plan that combines elements of the Modified Sunday Schedule scenario and the Fare Increase scenario and retains overnight service.

Under this plan, weekday and Saturday service levels will be reduced to match the levels of service currently offered on Sundays and wait times are expected to increase by approximately 68 percent. A total of 54 bus routes will be eliminated, including most express bus routes and the Purple Line Express. Some service will still be provided 24 hours a day to maintain basic mobility at all times, but the service hours on most bus and rail routes will be reduced as will frequency of service.

The CTA estimates that the service reductions would ultimately result in the elimination of about 2,000 jobs.

The addition of a fare increase will allow the CTA to retain Night Owl service and offer slightly higher service levels than originally proposed under the Modified Sunday Schedule.

Fares will increase from \$1.75 to \$2 for cash-paying customers and for rail customers who use Transit Cards. Transfers will no longer be sold to customers paying cash.

Customers who use passes, Chicago Cards (CC), Chicago Card Plus (CCP), and bus customers who use Transit Cards, will not be impacted. Fares for those cards will stay \$1.75 and transfers will still be available to them for 25 cents. Pass prices will remain the same. The bonus for CC and CCP customers will change. The 10 percent bonus will now be offered for every \$20 added to the card instead of the current \$10. The \$5 purchase fee for the CC and CCP will be waived through July 31, 2005.

Reduced fares, available to seniors, students and customers with disabilities, will increase from 85 cents to \$1 for those who pay cash and they will be unable to buy transfers. The reduced fare will remain 85 cents for customers using cards and transfers will still cost 15 cents. Prices for reduced fare passes – which allow unlimited transfers – will remain the same.

To see a list of the proposed service levels and fare increase, please go to www.transitchicago.com on the web and click on the link. (www.transitchicago.com April 13, 2005)

The Chicago Transit Authority has purchased bus simulators to provide the latest in training technology to CTA bus operators. The simulators enable the CTA to train new bus operators in key skills. The use of the state-of-the-art simulators is another way the CTA incorporates safety at every level of training. (Cont on page 2)

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CTA

Since 1997, CTA has reduced bus related accidents by 11 percent from 6.4 accidents to just 5.7 accidents for every 100,000 miles in 2004.

CTA's safety initiatives include increased communication between management and employees concerning safety, related issues, leading to an increased awareness of safety issues. The CTA has also implemented technologies such as wheel guards to prevent injuries from the rear wheels of buses and continually invests in the quality of its fleet through the purchase of new buses. A newer fleet is more reliable and increased reliability leads to safer service and fewer breakdowns. The recently installed voice announcement system on buses improves safety because it alerts customers to their destinations so they are not standing up too early and possibly falling or being jostled.

Combining computer software, video screens and a mockup of the operator's seating area on an actual CTA bus, the simulator teaches standard operating procedures for making turns, navigating intersections, following moving traffic and maneuvering the vehicle. It also can simulate real-life driving situations that provide student operators the experience of interacting with difficult weather conditions, pedestrians, other vehicles and unexpected obstacles.

Each system replicates the operating features of CTA's bus fleet including functional dashboards, driver seat, floor pedals, turn signals, mirrors, headlights, door control, ignition, gear selection and parking brake. Large model simulators allow student operators to experience a 360-degree visual display of their surroundings. The smaller models feature three screens that resemble the bus's front, left and right side views. Left and right side view mirrors also are included so that operators learn to gauge driving distance.

The CTA has a total of 18 bus simulators for training its 4,470 bus operators. There is one unit at each of the eight CTA bus garages. In addition, the training centers at the 74th Street Garage and at the Chicago Avenue Garage each have one large unit. Chicago Avenue training center also has three small units and 74th Street training center has four.

The new systems is in an acceptance phase as CTA personnel become familiar with its operation, train trainers, program software and develop specific training programs.

When fully operational, CTA will incorporate simulator training into the training required of all new bus operators. The CTA plans to use the system for recertification, defensive driving training and retraining veteran operators following an extended leave.

The \$1.5 million system is funded by the Strategic Capital Improvement Program administered by the Regional Transportation Authority. The simulator and software are manufactured by FAAC, Incorporated, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The contract was competitively bid.

A number of public transit agencies across the country are using the simulators including agencies in New York, Dallas, Houston and Washington, DC. (www.Transitchicago.com April 9, 2005)

On April 13, 2005, the Chicago Transit Board approved lease agreements for eight storefront properties located at CTA rail stations on the Red and Purple Lines. In addition to bringing new service to Chicago Transit Authority customers, the leases are expected to generate more than \$1 million in rent and capital improvements for the CTA over the next five years.

The seven new long-term leases and one new month-to-month lease bring the total number of storefront property agreements to 42. As part of their agreement with the CTA, the business owners will provide rent and make capital upgrades to improve the appearance of the spaces involved, the majority of which were previously vacant. The leases were competitively bid.

The locations and businesses for the new storefront leases are as follows:

1521 W Jarvis – general merchandise and news stand store (currently vacant)
1120 W Thorndale – tax, real estate and insurance service (currently vacant)
1118 W Thorndale – news stand (currently vacant)
3942 N Sheridan – lease renewal for Alta Vista Foods (same occupant)
3939-3941 N Sheridan Road – shoe store (currently vacant)
3938 N Sheridan Road – coffee shop (change in occupant)
1647 W Howard – fast food grill (currently vacant)
1024 Central – a convenience store (currently vacant)

By signing agreements with the CTA, each vendor has agreed to lease, operate and make capital upgrades to the storefront spaces.

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CTA

Capital improvements typically consist of electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning improvements, as well as new windows, counter tops, shelving, flooring and ceilings.

The leases are for a period of five years with the exception of the space near the Howard station, which is for a one-year period due to pending construction that is expected to get underway at the Howard station. (www.Transitchicago.com April 13, 2005)

The Chicago Transit Board on April 13, 2005, approved an ordinance that will help offset the effect of an upcoming taxicab fare increase on Taxi Access Program (TAP) customers and maintain the current level of service. The value of Chicago Transit Authority TAP vouchers will increase by \$1.50 to cover taxicab fares up to \$13.50 on May 11, the same date Chicago taxicab fares are set to increase by 12 percent. Currently TAP vouchers cover taxicab fares up to \$12.

TAP vouchers purchased before May 11 will be honored by taxicabs at the new \$13.50 value.

TAP gives paratransit customers certified by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) an opportunity to travel in taxis at reduced rates for trips that originate within the City of Chicago. A voucher is used to pay for all or part of a one-way ride up to the set valued amount, which stated above, will increase to \$13.50 on May 11. Any fare amounts over \$13.50 must be paid by the customer. The CTA reimburses the cab company for the fare amounts up to \$13.50.

Without the TAP program, the only public transportation option available to paratransit customers is the Special Services transportation (vans and sedans) which is more expensive to the CTA costing approximately \$27 per trip. The CTA provided more than 395,900 TAP trips last year.

CA receives no dedicated funding for federally required paratransit services, which include both Special Services and TAP reimbursements. Costs for paratransit have nearly doubled in the past five years, and currently represent five percent of the CTA's total operating costs. Put another way, a full one tenth of CTA operating subsidy goes to provide paratransit services.

• PACE PATTEN

Pace, the suburban transit agency, has scheduled a public hearing Thursday, April 28, from 3-5 pm to discuss the proposed elimination of Route 601 along Wood Dale Office Corridor. The hearing will be held at the Wood Dale City Hall Chambers, 404 N. Wood Dale Road.

Route 601 currently offers morning and afternoon service to the Wood Dale Metra Station and several locations throughout the Wood Dale Office Corridor. Pace is proposing the elimination of this service because of declining ridership and the recent loss of private funding subsidy. (www.pacebus.com)

• FOREIGN NEWS

The death toll from a train derailment April 25 on the West Japan Railway Co. (JR West) has risen to almost 100 as rescue workers struggled to free more than 10 people still trapped between two wrecked carriages.

A total of 456 people have been confirmed injured after a rapid service train they were riding in derailed on a right curve of the JR Fukuchiyama Line in Amagasaki, Hyogo Prefecture, on Monday morning, sending two front carriages crashing into an apartment complex.

Hyogo Prefectural Police began to remove the second coach that had been twisted around the building after a number of victims were recovered from inside it. Once rescue operations are completed, the workers will remove the front car that rolled over after ramming into the complex's first-floor parking lot.

The government's Aircraft and Railway Accident Investigation Committee suspects the train was traveling far in excess of the speed limit of 70 kilometers per hour at the time of the accident.

Committee inspectors are examining damage to the carriages and tracks in a bid to determine the cause of the accident while analyzing data stored in the train's monitoring system recovered from one of its carriages.

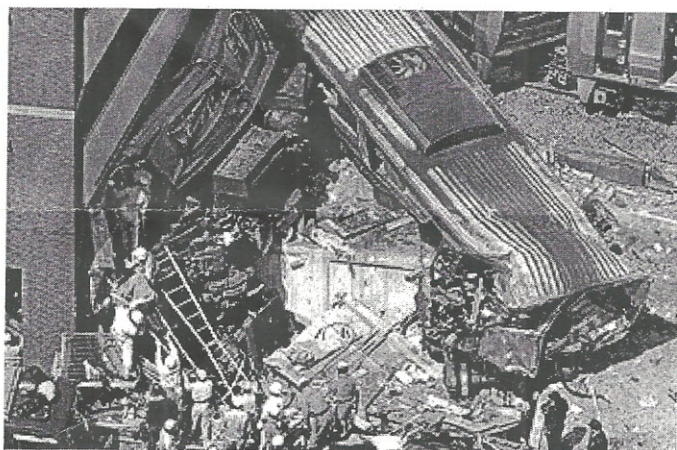
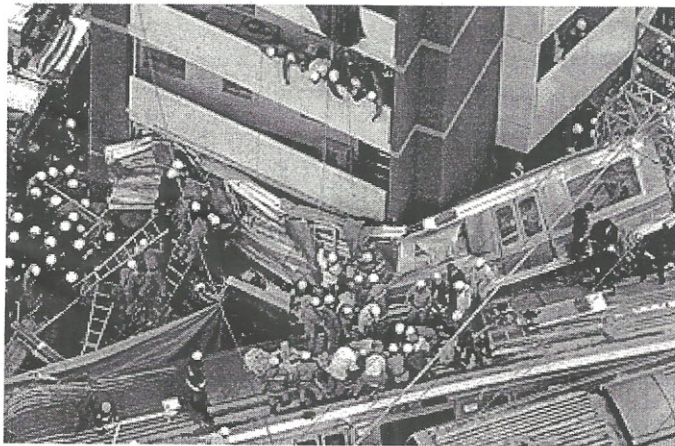
The accident occurred between Tsukaguchi and Amagasaki stations at around 9:20 am on Monday, killing 91 people – 50 men and 41 women. About 580 passengers were aboard the train.

Services on the Amagasaki-Takarazuka section of the line have been suspended since the deadly accident, and West Japan Railway Co. (JR West), the operator of the line, has asked Hankyu Railway and other transportation firms to transport passengers. (Cont on page 4)

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FOREIGN NEWS

Over a two-day period following the accident, 665 trains were cancelled, inconveniencing approximately 263,000 people. JR West officials said they can not predict when services on the line will be fully restored.



JR West Chairman Shojiro Nanya, 63, and President Takeshi Kakiuchi, 61, have decided to resign after the company works out plans to compensate the bereaved families of the victims and survivors, and confirms the cause of the accident.

- CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

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

May 13. Kenosha Streetcar Society meeting. 7:00pm-9:45pm. Immanuel Methodist Church (54th/Sheridan - 1-1/2 blocks east of the Kenosha Metra/UP Train Station), Kenosha, WI. Admission: \$5.00 for nonmembers. Program - *"To be announced"*.

May 13. Chicago Chapter-R&LHS meeting. 7:00pm. The Chicago Temple (77 W. Washington - Pierce Hall (lower level auditorium)). Admission: Free. Program - *"An insider's view of over 30 years of CTA Rapid Transit,"* a slide presentation by Lou Gerard.

May 20. Railroad Club of Chicago meeting. 7:30 pm. The Chicago Temple (77 W. Washington - Pierce Hall (lower level auditorium)) Donation: \$3.00 requested. Program - *"To be announced."*

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