



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.

• JUNE OSA MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be on June 3, 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 will be a slide presentation by long-time transit photographer John LeBeau.

• CTA CORNER

As Chicago Transit Authority officials lobby the state for more money to avoid massive service cuts in July; an actuarial consultant warned on May 13th that the agency's retirement plan could run out of money to cover health care benefits for retirees next year.

The fund could be short \$13 million in 2006 and \$79 million in 2007 if projected health care costs for retirees are reached, Alex Rivera, a senior consultant with Gabriel, Roeder, Smith & Co., told the CTA board.

The board has known for nearly a year that its entire

pension fund could be bankrupt in 2014. But the numbers released Friday reveal a more immediate problem.

CTA management, which wants to increase employee contribution levels to the pension fund and obtain concessions from retirees, has broached the subject with unions during ongoing contract negotiations, officials said. But agency Chairman Carole Brown said Friday's presentation also highlights the need for the state to increase transit funding in the region. In the past, the CTA has skipped making contributions to the pension plan to cover operating budget shortfalls.

Currently, the pension is 48 percent funded and CTA's unmet pension obligations are about \$200 million annually.

While pension holidays are one source of the problem, significant investment losses in 2001 and 2002 along with the rising cost of health care have further complicated matters.

The CTA's pension problem has grabbed the attention of House Speaker Michael Madigan, who asked agency officials questions about it at a recent hearing on mass transit funding. Yet some legislators say it's an example of poor budgetary planning. (www.chicagotribune.com May 13, 2005)

Ridership on CTA's bus and rail system has increased in each of the first four months of 2005 despite the uncertainty of public transit funding and the level of service the Chicago Transit Authority will be able to provide come July. For the year, ridership is up 3.7 percent over 2004, the highest year-to-date ridership since 2001.

The most recent ridership figures for April 2005 show a system-wide increase in ridership of 6.7 percent (38.7 million rides) compared to April 2004. Weekdays increased 6.5 percent, Saturdays were up 5.8 percent and Sundays were up 10.1 percent. While weekend ridership has been strong the past two years, the resurgence in the weekday rush-hours is a promising trend.

On weekdays, CTA provided over 1.5 million rides, an increase of over 93,000 rides compared to last year. This growth is a sign that CTA is attracting new and returning customers. These gains are particularly important given CTA's efforts in Springfield to increase funding for regional transit operations.

Cont on page 2.

(Cont from page 1)

CTA

Earlier in the week, the Texas Transportation Institute released its 2005 Urban Mobility Report. Specific to Chicago, the report cited the region as having the second worst traffic congestion in the country. Transit, however, was a bright spot. The report said that the Chicago region's congestion is much less than it would be without the transit system.

Since 1983, the year transit operating funding was last revisited in Springfield, the region was ranked seventh. In that time, the typical peak-hour traveler in the Chicago region has experienced over a 260 percent increase in time wasted in traffic congestion. The cost of this congestion is estimated to exceed \$4.2 billion annually. The other regions that Chicagoland has surpassed in traffic congestion have all increased their transit ridership while, despite recent gains, ridership in the Chicago area has declined by thirty percent over the past two decades. (www.transitchicago.com May 13, 2005)

In a move designed to decrease congestion and improve the flow of bus traffic in and out of Navy Pier, the Chicago Transit Board on May 13th, approved a contract to rehabilitate the CTA bus turnaround facility located at Navy Pier north of E. Grand Avenue.

The project will reverse the flow of traffic through the turnaround so that buses will enter the bus turnaround from the west end of the turnaround and exit on the east end of the turnaround onto Grand Avenue. Currently buses enter the turnaround from the east end of the turnaround and exit onto Grand Avenue at the west end.

"Changing the flow of traffic through the bus turnaround will allow buses to operate more efficiently in and out of Navy Pier and make it easier for customers to identify their route. When complete, buses will be positioned facing customers as they approach the boarding area," said CTA President Frank Kruesi.

The project includes the rehabilitation of the boarding area – complete with bus shelters, canopies, lighting and benches. The west end entry area will be widened and a new unloading area will be constructed on the north side of the turnaround.

Navy Pier, Chicago's number one tourist destination with nearly nine million visitors last year, is served by the #2 Hyde Park Express, #29 State, #65 Grand, #66 Chicago, #120 North Western/Wacker Express, #121 Union/Wacker Express and #124 Navy Pier bus routes.

Chicago-based Oakley Construction Company, Inc. will serve as the construction contractor on the capital improvement project. The contract is valued at \$541,290, with funding provided by the Regional Transportation Authority. The project was competitive bid.

Construction will begin sometime after the summer tourist season ends on Labor Day and be completed by the spring of 2006. CTA buses will continue to use the current bus turnaround during construction. (www.transitchicago.com May 13, 2005)

The Chicago Transit Authority announced that, due to a programming error by the manufacturer, Cubic Transportation Systems, 139 Chicago Cards are failing to deduct the fare from the card when used.

Introduced to customers in November 2002, there are currently 70,513 Chicago Cards in circulation. The defective cards represent only 0.2 percent of those sold.

CTA has already sent replacement Chicago Cards to 63 customers who registered their cards and have been identified as owning defective cards. These cards are scheduled to be deactivated on May 19.

The remaining 76 customers, who have not registered their Chicago Cards, are asked to check the serial numbers on the back of the card against a list of serial numbers of defective cards posted on CTA's web site, www.transitchicago.com, or on the Chicago Card web site www.chicago-card.com. If the serial number is listed, contact CTA customer Service at 1-800-YOUR-CTA (1-800-968-7282) to obtain a replacement card.

Customers without access to a computer can contact Customer Service to check the serial number. Cards included on the list will be deactivated on May 23.

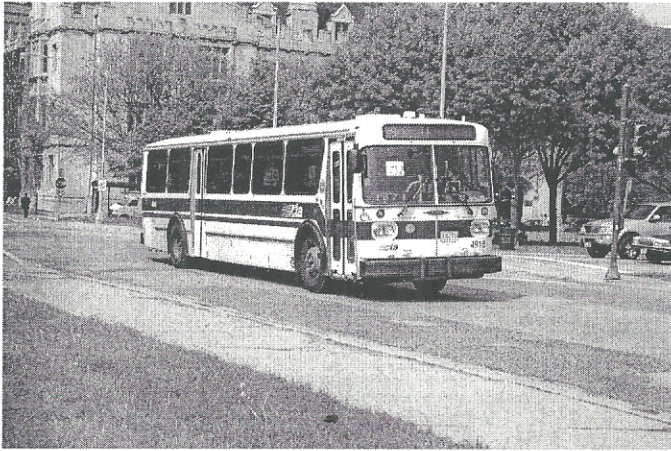
The balance on replacement cards will include the value added to the original card by the customer, minus the cost of rides taken. In cases where the cost of rides taken exceeds the balance of the card, CTA is providing customers with a zero-balance Chicago Card. Customers will not be charged for rides that exceed the balance on the defective cards. The CTA is seeking reimbursement for those rides from Cubic. (www.transitchicago.com May 17, 2005)

A few issues back, we mentioned that the Chicago Transit Authority had purchased some used Orion buses from Pace for use on the four CTA routes that are operated under contract to serve the University of Chicago in Hyde Park. (Cont on page 3)

(Cont from page 2)

CTA

Here are two photos taken of two of the buses at 59th and Ellis. As can be seen in the photos, the destination signs have failed and the route number is written on a window card.



CTA 4916



CTA 4917

• PACE PATTERN

Pace 2004 audit results show Pace met its required 40 percent recovery ratio for the year. Operating revenues increased from 3.2 percent from 2003 and operating expenses increased 2.8 percent from the prior year. Non-operating revenue decreased largely due to a decline in State Operating Assistance from the RTA, Federal Operating Grants and capital Grant Reimbursements.

Pace met its budgeting requirement for 2004. Operating revenue and Operating Expenses were essentially at budget. Additional funds received for Federal Operating

Grants contributed to the favorable budget performance in 2004.

Other highlights:

- Net assets (total assets less total liabilities) decreased \$21 million to \$203.1 million at the end of 2004.
- Total operating revenues were \$51.5 million, which represented a 3.2 percent increase from 2003.
- Non-operating revenues decreased \$62.7 million (or 36.8 percent) to 107.8 million.
- Total operating expenses increased by \$5 million (or 2.8 percent) to 180.3 million during 2004, reflecting increases in Pace-owned services, fixed-route and paratransit expenses and vanpool, centralized operations and administrative expenses.
- The recovery ratio of 40 percent is attributable in part to revenue and expenses incurred by not-for-profit providers from the VIP, Advantage Program and Federal Capital Cost of Contracting funds.
- Pace served 34.4 million passengers in 2004, reflecting a 1.9 percent increase from the 2003 ridership total of 33.7 million. Average weekday ridership in 2004 was 118,762 compared with 117,300 in 2003, which equated to a 1.2 percent increase.
- Pace's vanpool program continued to grow, with a 10.5 percent increase in ridership in 2004. The total number of vans on the road climbed from 462 to 478 in 2004 (the program recently inaugurated its 500th van into the system).

Pace first-quarter 2005 results show Pace operated within budget and recovery levels.

- System revenues exceeded budget by 4.8 percent due largely to the favorable performance of fare-box revenue.
- Operating expenses were favorable to budget by 1.2 percent, with most areas reporting favorable budget performance.
- A budget overrun in maintenance is the results of parts and supply costs and fuel exceeding budget.
- The overall favorable performance of both revenue and expenses has resulted in a funding requirement that is 4 percent below budgeted levels.
- The system recovery ratio. At 40 percent, exceeds the budgeted rate of 38.91 percent through March.

(cont on page 4)

PACE

- Pace had an operating budget surplus of \$1,055,576 for the first quarter of 2005.

The Pace Board of Directors authorized discontinuance of Route 1027 Homewood/Chicago Ridge-Warrenville, Route 1024 Chicago-Warrenville, and Route 801 Wood Dale Office Corridor due to declining ridership. These actions follow a series of public hearings and meetings with officials, interest groups and riders to discuss the moves.

Ridership on the Pace system climbed 7 percent in April compared with the same month in 2004. Approximately 167,000 more passengers boarded Pace buses this April compared with the last; the year-to-date ridership is estimated at 6.2 percent higher than last year, totaling about 11.6 million. Pace paratransit and vanpool services have also seen increases in ridership of about 3 percent.

(www.pacebus.com)

• DOWNERS GROVE

The Village of Downers Grove has purchased from Pace a number of 2200 series Ikiris buses that had been retired due to the delivery of new NABI lowfloor buses this year.

Below are a few photos of the purchased buses. We hope to have a list of bus numbers in a future issue of Green Pennant. Photos by Jeff Rutan via Jeff Waxman.



Pace 2250, 2255



Pace 2243



Pace 2218

• OTHER NEWS

State grant money for Chicago Transit Authority rail cars, Metra station improvements and new Pace buses would lapse if it isn't spent by June 30, under two bills pending before the General Assembly.

State legislators, who are facing a \$1 billion gap in the upcoming budget, want to delay spending the \$70 million that previously was awarded for regional transit projects.

But transit officials said withholding the money could jeopardize \$200 million in federal dollars because some of the grants provide the local match necessary to leverage those funds.

(Cont on page 5)

(Cont from page 4)

OTHER NEWS

In addition, they said state grant money hasn't been spent because it can take many years to implement some of the projects.

"You don't just go down to the corner store and buy buses," said Pace Executive Director T.J. Ross.

Bids must be solicited, a manufacturer must be picked and then it can take a year for the buses to be delivered, he added.

It's unclear if the bills have the political backing to pass. House Speaker Michael Madigan's spokesman, Steve Brown, said the House version doesn't seem to be moving forward, even though Madigan is listed as a sponsor of the Senate bill. But the sponsor of the Senate bill, Sen. Donne Trotter (D-Chicago), defended the legislation, citing the state's budget crisis.

"Until we can be told that these dollars need to be reappropriated to them, we are not going to let it just sit around for another year," he said.

The legislation creates another potential financial setback to the region's three transit agencies, which already were forced to scale back their capital budgets this year because the state has not replaced the Illinois FIRST bonding program.

Regional Transportation Authority Executive Director Paula Thibeault and other RTA officials were in Springfield the week of May 16th meeting with legislators and state officials to discuss the issue. The authority put together a two-page analysis that lists more than a dozen examples of projects that would be terminated, scaled back or delayed if the bills are passed.

But Illinois Department of Transportation spokesman Matt Vanover said none of the projects will be cancelled. Instead, he said they will have to wait a year, though there is no guarantee the money will be available then.

According to the RTA, the projects include CTA plans to rehabilitate existing rail cars, make rail station improvements at various locations and upgrade the public address systems. The bulk of the CTA funds – about \$46 million – would help pay for the rail cars, replacing existing cars more than 30 years old.

CTA has gone out to bid for 206 cars with additional options that could raise the total to 706 cars. About 50 cars would be part of the Brown Line expansion project,

which will extend station platforms to accommodate eight train cars rather than six, CTA officials said.

For Metra, the legislation would affect rail station improvements in Round Lake Beach, preparatory work for a station at Roosevelt Road in Chicago and restoration of the 99th Street station in Beverly, officials said. It also would postpone construction of a new Metra station in Bartlett, which is a key element in the village's town center redevelopment project, according to Jim Plonczynski, the village's community development director.

For Pace, the legislation would affect the purchase of 45 buses and improvements to various bus garages. It would also affect the purchase and installation of traffic signal priority equipment, which enables buses to trigger or maintain a green light. The agency is counting on the devices to help its buses travel through suburbs more quickly. (www.chicagotribune.com May 18, 2005)

• METRA MATTERS

During the early morning hours of May 5, 2005, a loaded BN/SF coal train derailed while crossing the Metra Rock Island District at 16th Street.

For some reason Metra cancelled all inbound and outbound Rock Island District commuter trains during the morning and afternoon commuter periods, rather than operating to Blue Island and having passengers transfer to Metra Electric Blue Island trains. Metra had the crossing partially open for the evening rush, albeit with slow orders through the crossing.



NBC 5 web photo

(Cont on page 6)

(Cont from page 5)

METRA

Suburban cyclists who want to take a spin on Chicago's lakefront and city residents who want to head to the collar counties for a bike ride can bring their wheels aboard certain Metra trains starting June 1, the commuter rail agency's board decided on May 20, 2005.

Bicycles will be allowed on weekend trains and on off-peak and reverse-commute weekday trains through October 30. The agency then will review its bikes-on-board policy and determine if special measures are necessary for the winter, Metra Executive Director Philip Pagano said.

The board's unanimous vote was welcome news to cycling enthusiasts who have long pushed for Metra to allow bikes on trains, especially since the CTA and the Pace suburban bus service already allow them on their vehicles.

The push gained momentum this year with the launch of an online petition drive and introduction of state legislation that would require Metra to carry bicycles.

Metra officials have hesitated because the only spaces available for the bikes on train cars have been areas reserved for riders with disabilities. But in recent months, the agency worked with its mobility access committee and the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation to develop the policy that was adopted.

The new policy:

A. Allows bikes on all weekday trains arriving in Chicago after 9:30 a.m., and departing the city before 3 p.m. and after 7 p.m. on both inbound and outbound trains.

B. Allows bikes on all weekend trains except for the weekends of the Chicago Blues Festival, Taste of Chicago and July 4th fireworks, Venetian Night, Chicago Air & Water Show and Chicago Jazz Festival, and the Friday before the Labor Day holiday weekend.

C. Requires individual bicyclists to be at least 18 years old. An adult must accompany riders 12 through 17. Children under 12 will not be allowed to bring bikes on board.

D. Prohibits tricycles and tandem bikes.

E. Limits the number of bicycles to two per handicapped-accessible car.

If priority seating is needed for passengers with disabilities, cyclists may not be able to board or may be asked to leave a train they are on. (www.chicagotribune.com May 20, 2005)

• NW INDIANA NEWS

If acronyms were worth money, the authority that is assembling a regional bus system might have the funding to hire its own staff.

The Regional Transportation Authority, widely known as the RTA, announced its intentions on May 11, 2005, to change its name to the Regional Bus Authority, or RBA.

"This is going to be my last meeting on the RTA d/b/a RBA," Hammond, Indiana Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. said, connecting the two names with the initials commonly used to replace the phrase "doing business as."

McDermott's resignation and the authority's name change both stemmed from the law signed by Gov. Mitch Daniels on May 11th that creates an overarching authority called the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority.

The new group, when it first meets this fall, will become the central repository of money and planning for ambitious improvements to the region's airport, commuter rail lines, municipal bus services and lakefront amenities.

Groups representing the airport, rail lines, bus service and lakeshore projects will have to appeal to the centralized development authority for funding, said Dennis Rittenmeyer, president of the bus authority and Calumet College of St. Joseph.

Rittenmeyer said although the law did not turn out the way he would have designed it, changing the bus authority's name was an important symbolic step to signal that it supported the overall efforts of the development authority.

The bus authority must assemble and submit a regional busing plan in short order to get funding by January, when McDermott said the cities were told they could discontinue their municipal bus services. (www.nwtimes.com May 12, 2005)

OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

CHARTER TRIP TO ILLINOIS RAILWAY MUSEUM
JUNE 4, 2005

PICKUP

9:30 A.M. DES PLAINES BLUE LINE STATION

10:00 A.M. RIVER ROAD BLUE LINE STATION

RETURN

7:00 P.M. RIVER ROAD BLUE LINE STATION

7:30 P.M. DES PLAINES BLUE LINE STATION

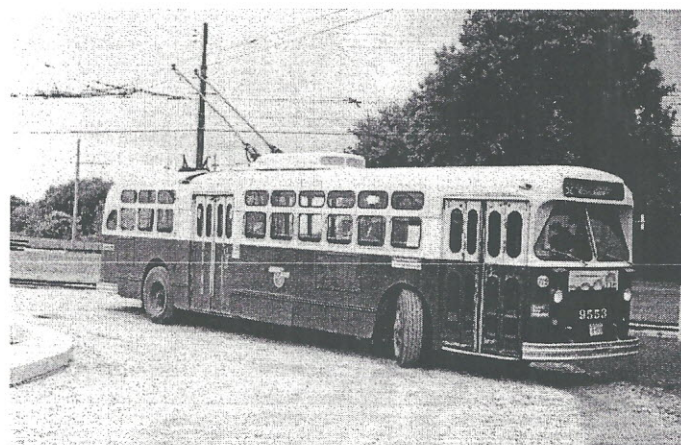
FARE: \$10.00 DONATION

Come join the Omnibus Society of America on June 4, 2005, on our trip to the Illinois Railway Museum in beautiful Union, Illinois.

We will depart the Des Plaines Blue Line station at 9:30 a.m. and the River Road Blue Line Station at 10:00 am using a bus donated by the Chicagoland Historical Bus Museum.

We are planning on arriving at the Illinois Railway Museum at 12:00 noon and spending a full afternoon at the museum riding their diverse fleet of equipment.

Entrance to the museum is not included in the price of the trip.



Departure from the Illinois Railway Museum will be at 4:00 p.m., with a dinner stop enroute back to Chicago. The dinner stop will be individual settlement.

Arrival back at River Road is planned for 7:00 pm and at Des Plaines at 8:00 pm.

Join us for a day of riding vintage equipment on OSA's yearly trip to the Illinois Railway Museum. We hope to see you there.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT FANTRIP

DATE: SUNDAY JULY 31, 2005

TIME: 1:30PM TO 5:30PM

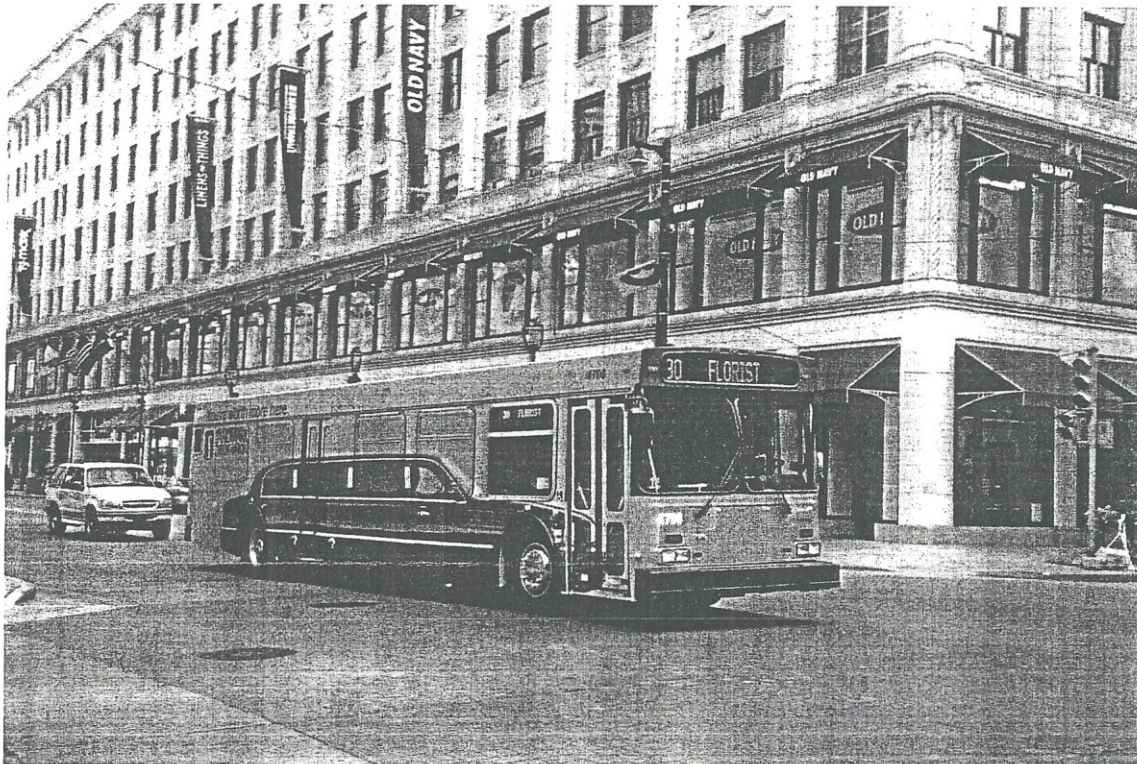
START POINT: AMTRAK STATION

COST: \$22.00

BUS: MCTS 4700 DECALED AS A LIMO FOR LANDMARK CREDIT UNION

**WE WILL BE RIDING AND PHOTOGRAPHING THIS BUS
THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM.**

COME OUT AND RIDE THIS SPECIAL BUS.



Any questions or ideas?

E-Mail : www.topcatbus@yahoo.com