



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.

Visit the Omnibus Society of America website at "[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.

### • NOVEMBER OSA MEETING

The November meeting of the Omnibus Society of America was held on November 4, 2005, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2751 W. Winona Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

Our program for the evening "*More musings by Aulenbach*," will be a slide presentation by Mike Mulenbach.

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.

Two positions on the OSA Board of Directors are up for election in 2006. If any member in good standing wishes to run for election to fill either of these vacancies please let any current board member know of your wishes at the November meeting.

### • CTA CORNER

In his 2006 Budget Recommendations presented on October 6, 2005, Chicago Transit Authority President Frank Kruesi proposed maintaining current service levels and raising cash fares by 25 cents. Although the CTA's

long-term financial problems are not yet solved, Kruesi said he is committed to continuing to operate at current service levels and having the CTA work as efficiently as possible to manage its way through a difficult budget year in order to give the General Assembly, Governor Blagojevich and the RTA the additional time they need to devise a fair solution to the structural funding problem challenging the regional transit system.

Kruesi's 2006 budget recommendations include an operating budget of \$1.037 billion – an increase of \$40.6 million, or 4.1 percent, over the 2005 budget – that would include a public funding level of \$524 million. The higher costs of fuel, healthcare, claims and litigated expenses have all contributed to the need for an increased operating budget over 2005.

Kruesi said when the 2006 budget process began, the CTA faced a projected shortfall of approximately \$90 million, but that a \$14.1 million increase in public funding from the RTA and anticipated paratransit funding of \$27.1 million from the state have helped reduce it to just under \$49 million.

He said that the CTA will continue to find more efficiencies and carefully manage its headcount. Over the past year, the Board and management have embarked on an intense and thorough review of CTA operations with an independent team of efficiency experts, AECOM Consult. They have helped develop a blueprint for new initiatives reflected in his budget recommendations for 2006.

Kruesi added that since he joined the CTA in 1997, major efficiency initiatives have helped reverse over a decade-long downward spiral of service cuts, fare increases and lost ridership. In 2006, the number of CTA employees is projected to be approximately 1,200 (10 percent) lower than in 1997. Cumulatively, an estimated \$1.025 billion has been saved through cost-cutting initiatives. At the same time, service levels and ridership have increased.

To offset spiking fuel prices, which continue to put significant pressure on the CTA budget, Kruesi said that he is proposing to increase cash fares and rail fares paid with Transit Cards by 25 cents, for a total fare of \$2. In addition, those who pay cash would no longer be able to purchase transfers. The increase is expected to generate \$17 million. The CTA uses about 24 million gallons of fuel annually. In 1999, fuel costs of \$12.5 million made up 1.5 percent of the budget. For 2006, fuel costs are budgeted at \$48 million and comprise 4.6 percent of the proposed budget.

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## CTA

Kruesi said that other initiatives and anticipated ridership growth will generate an additional \$2 million in revenue.

The fare proposal is identical to the one approved, but not implemented, for 2005. Fares would not increase for customers who use either of the Chicago Card options and transfers would still be available to them for an additional 25 cents. Fares would also remain the same for all passes, such as the 7-day or 30-day passes. The \$5 purchase fee for Chicago Card and Chicago Card Plus will be waived from December 1, 2005, through the first quarter of 2006 as an additional incentive for customers to switch from cash.

Kruesi recommends maintaining existing service levels. But in order to be able to afford to do so, Kruesi said he reluctantly concurs with the RTA's recommendation that the CTA transfer an additional \$29 million in capital funds to its operating budget in 2005. Kruesi said he accedes to this in the spirit of regional cooperation and with the understanding that this is purely a temporary measure to buy time for the region's funding issues to be resolved.

With these steps, Kruesi said, the CTA can maintain its existing service for the next year, close its budget gap and meet its financial obligations while continuing to work toward permanent financial stability.

In addition, due to the General Assembly's decision to transfer paratransit service to Pace exclusively, with RTA oversight, Kruesi recommends that the previously planned fare increase for paratransit scheduled to go into effect at the start of 2006 be cancelled to allow Pace maximum flexibility going forward.

Last year, the Chicago Transit Board approved an increase of the paratransit fare from \$1.75 to \$3.50. When the General Assembly provided additional funding, the fare increase was postponed until January 1, 2006. Kruesi said that in his view it would not be appropriate for the CTA to adopt significant policy changes during this transition period since it will not be operating paratransit much longer, and will, like Metra, provide mainline service only.

Kruesi reported that the agency's financial performance for 2005 is better than expected. Through August 2005, systemwide ridership was up 3.8 percent over 2004. With increased ridership comes an increase in farebox revenue. Combined with investment income, advertising revenue and parking fees, CTA's 2005 system-generated revenue is projected at \$510.5 million, which represents

a growth rate of 2.1 percent over the 2005 budget. In addition, sales tax revenues in the city and suburbs are stronger than projected due to a rebounding economy.

The 2006 budget proposal includes a capital improvement program of \$1.8 billion over the next five years. The five-year plan includes \$41 million in preventive maintenance in 2006 and \$65 million in 2007, which will alleviate shortfalls in CTA's 2006 and 2007 operating budgets. It will, however, defer some capital projects to later years. The RTA has indicated that it will provide \$61.9 million in additional capital funding to CTA in 2006 and allow the agency to use capital funds for preventive maintenance. When future funding is made available by the Illinois General Assembly, additional capital funds will not have to be diverted to the operating budget and CTA's ability to maintain and upgrade its infrastructure will be improved.

Capital projects include expanding capacity on the Brown Line, renovation of the Howard 'L' station on the Red Line, upgrading the bus fleet and maintenance of the rail fleet.

A substantial amount of CTA's capital improvement program remains unfunded. As the Illinois legislature looks at providing additional capital funding to the region, CTA will be conducting a thorough and systemic look at the additional funding needed to reach a state of good repair, similar to the comprehensive assessment undertaken in anticipation of Illinois FIRST. Vital projects such as replacement of subway lighting and ventilation systems, viaduct renewal, track and track bed renewal, and station upgrades remain unfunded. In addition, CTA is preparing federally required analyses for new projects such as the Circle Line and Ogden Transitway, and continuing planning for extensions of the Orange, Red and Yellow Lines as well as express airport service, to meet the needs of future growth in the region. ([www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) October 6, 2005)

**On October 11, 2005,** the Chicago Transit Board approved a contract for up to \$4 million for the purchase of machines that will allow Chicago Card customers to add value to and check balances on their Chicago Cards. CTA will conduct a pilot program to test the machines at select locations throughout the area by the end of the year. To date, 61 merchants have expressed interest in participating in the pilot. If the pilot proves successful the contract provides an option to purchase additional equipment to expand the number of outlets where reloading of Chicago Cards is offered.

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## CTA

Previously, customers could only add value or check balances on Chicago cards at farecard vending machines located primarily at CTA rail stations. By increasing the number of outlets where customers may easily add value, the Chicago Card will become an even more convenient choice in CTA fare payment.

Adding value at the new locations will be fast and convenient. Customers will simply touch their Chicago Cards to the electronic scanner and pay cash to the merchant. Once the amount is verified by the merchant, the customer again touches the card to the scanner to authorize the transaction. For the pilot, merchants will be able to accept cash only from CTA customers.

Value is stored on a Chicago Card, just as it is on a magnetic strip transit card, but it offers additional features, such as faster boarding on buses and trains. The Chicago Card, like its account-based counterpart Chicago Card Plus, resembles a credit card and enables customers to simply touch the card against a target on bus fareboxes and rail turnstiles, and go. The extra seconds saved for each customer makes travel even more efficient as those seconds add up and shave time off the boarding process for everyone.

In February, CTA made Chicago Cards available for purchase at 150 non-CTA outlets such as Currency Exchanges, Jewel-Osco and Dominick's Finer Food stores. Increasing the availability of these electronic farecards has helped to significantly boost circulation, as did waiving the \$5 purchase fee earlier this year. Through the end of September, more than 93,000 Chicago Cards are in circulation, a 47 percent increase over year-end 2004. For the same period, nearly 123,000 Chicago Card Plus farecards are in circulation, a 55 percent increase over year-end 2004 for those who prefer a farecard option where the value is stored in an account and reloads automatically.

Last week, CTA President Frank Kruesi announced his recommendations for the CTA's 2006 budget. To offset spiking fuel prices, which continue to put significant pressure on the CTA's budget, Kruesi recommended a 25 cent fare increase for customers paying cash and rail customers who use magnetic strip transit cards. Fares would not increase for customers who use either of the Chicago Card options, passes on buses or trains, or for bus customers who use magnetic strip farecards. The budget proposal also recommends a waiver of the \$5 purchase fee for Chicago Card and Chicago Card Plus from December 1, 2005, through the first quarter of 2006 as an additional incentive for customers to switch.

The 2006 budget proposal recommends that pass prices remain unchanged. The proposed 2006 fare increase was carefully structured to minimize the adverse impact on CTA customers; especially those who can least afford it. Keeping pass prices steady is a key element in the 2006 proposal.

Although they make up only one-quarter of all CTA customers, those earning less than \$20,000 account for more than one-third of all 7-Day pass purchases. Purchasers of CTA's 7-Day pass have average annual household incomes one-third lower than CTA customers in general. Half of all of CTA's reduced-fare monthly passes are sold to persons with annual household incomes of less than \$20,000. If the 2006 proposed fare increase is approved, by limiting the price increase to cash fares, CTA will be able to shield its most price sensitive customers while still generating about \$17 million to offset high fuel prices.

Both the Chicago Card and the Chicago Card Plus currently offer a 10 percent bonus for every \$10 of value added. The 2006 budget proposal recommends raising the bonus threshold to 10 percent for every \$20 of value added.

The Board also approved an ordinance that establishes a 1.8 percent rate of commission on the amount of value added to Chicago Cards for participating sales outlets. The action is designed to provide an additional incentive for merchants offering the ability to add value and check balances of Chicago Cards. ([www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) October 11, 2005)

## • PACE PATTERN

**With Metra set to expand** commuter service on its SouthWest Line, the need for complementary bus service is going to diminish. Therefore, Pace has scheduled a public hearing to consider the elimination of its Route 835 Southwest Suburban Chicago Express. The hearing is being held in conjunction with the Southwest Cook County Public Hearing on Pace's 2006 budget. It will begin at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 26 at the Palos Heights Council Chambers, 7607 West College Drive in Palos Heights. Pace staff will be there until 6:30 p.m. for anyone wishing to comment on Route 835 or the budget.

Route 835 operates between downtown Chicago and Orland Park, linking all suburban Metra SouthWest Service stations. It was designed to supplement the commuter line by providing extra rush hour trips and midday service. Metra plans to nearly double the number of SouthWest Service trains in early 2006. (Cont on page 4)



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## PACE

At that time they plan to stop subsidizing the Pace bus service.

It would be difficult for Pace to continue to operate Route 835 successfully without the Metra subsidy. Trains are going to provide people with a faster trip in the same southwest suburban corridor that includes the communities of Orland Park, Palos Heights, Palos Park, Worth, Chicago Ridge and Oak Lawn. When commuters reach Union Station other transit services are available to reach locations throughout the downtown area. Pace is taking a closer look at its services in the southwest suburbs as part of the latest restructuring effort, the South/Southwest Cook-Will County Initiative. ([www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com) October 10, 2005)

**The Pace Board released a balanced proposed 2006 budget** without any general fare increase or service reductions. At their meeting on October 11, Executive Director T.J. Ross cited ridership increases as one of the reasons no such actions were needed. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the budget at nine public hearings scheduled for October 25-October 27.

Following the hearings, Pace Board members consider public input at their November 9 meeting before giving the proposed budget final approval. It needs to be submitted to the RTA Board by November 15.

Pace Chairman John Case said the budget is based on a number of assumptions regarding available funding and operating costs, particularly relating to the agency's operation of the CTA's ADA paratransit service beginning on July 1, 2006. The 2006 operating budget, totaling \$202.3 million, was balanced by once again drawing from federal capital funds and using reserves. All fares remain the same except for a \$3.00 increase on the average monthly vanpool fare. Ridership growth is projected to continue with a 6.4 percent increase over this year.

Pace's Capital Program is \$29.1 million, and includes the purchase of 18 fixed route buses, 60 paratransit vehicles, 119 vanpool vehicles as well as support facilities and equipment. A small amount of capital funding has also been designated for the development of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Transit Signal Priority (TSP) projects. ([www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com) October 13, 2005)

**New service on Randall Road**, new route numbers and new schedules are all part of the changes that started Monday October 24 on Pace routes in and around Aurora. The changes are the results of a year long effort,

known as the Fox Valley/Southwest DuPage Initiative, to redesign Pace service to better accommodate riders and changes that have occurred in the area. They also affect Montgomery, North Aurora, Batavia, Geneva, Naperville and St. Charles.

Pace wants to be sure riders know how to use their new service. During the morning and evening rush hours on Thursday, October 20, Friday, October 21, Monday, October 24 and Tuesday, October 25, Pace employees serving as Transit Ambassadors were handing out schedules and answered questions at the Aurora Transportation Center located on Broadway.

All new Pace route schedules are yellow in color. They are available on Pace buses and at key locations in the community such as the City Hall and Library. The new schedules can also be previewed on Pace's website, [www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com). Riders should find the route they are currently using and click on the passenger notice symbol next to the route name and number, Scroll to the bottom of the notice page headed "Attention Pace Passengers" for a complete list of new routes and a link to the schedule preview. Information can also be obtained by calling the RTA Travel Information Center at 836-7000 using any local area code.

Pace is also spreading the word through a number of different channels. Since routes serving schools or Aurora's east Side are changing, special service guides have been given to the school district for distribution. An outreach program to the Hispanic community has also been underway with visits to the Illinois Employment and Training Center, the Aurora Community Center and the Aurora Public Library. Schedules are being distributed to businesses along new routes and changes discussed with Human Resource Managers at major employers like Westfield Shoppingtown Fox Valley and Meijer.

Among the features of the redesigned Pace Aurora service are a one seat ride from the west side of Aurora to Edwards Hospital, the Naperville Metra Station and downtown Naperville on Route 530 West Galena - Westfield Shoppingtown Fox Valley - Naperville, a streamlined Route 802 Aurora - St Charles with service to Charlestowne Mall, a new shuttle serving the Route 59 corridor and service on Randall Road with Route 529 Randall Road - 5th Street. Below is a list of all routes operating on Monday, October 24:

**Route 521 East Circulator** - A combination of Route 521 High Street, Route 525 Farnsworth and Route 527 Moecheville.

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## PACE

**Route 524 West Circulator** – Covers most of the current Route 524 Downer as well as parts of Route 522 Montgomery.

**Route 528 Aurora Transportation Center–Rush Copley Medical Center** – a restructured version of Route 528 Fifth Street that will provide two-way service on Union Street.

**Route 529 Randall Road-5th Street** – Combine Route 522 Montgomery and Route 529 Indian Trail into a service that extends north on Randall Road.

**Route 530 West Galena-Westfield Shoppingtown Fox Valley-Naperville** – Combines the current Route 526 West Galena with Route 530 Fox Valley Center.

**Route 532 Illinois Avenue** – Replaces Route 532 Sullivan Road; some portions of the Sullivan Road route will now be covered by Route 529 Randall Road-5th Street. ([www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com) October 18, 2005)

## • METRA MATTERS

**Metra riders would have to pay 5 percent more to take the train next year under a 2006 budget proposal recommended Wednesday, October 19, 2005.**

Citing skyrocketing fuel costs and increased security expenses, Metra staff recommended the fare increase to the board's Budget and Finance Committee. If approved by the full board on Friday, October 21, the increase would go into effect in February and be the first since 2002 and the fifth in Metra's 21-year history.

Several committee members said that although they were reluctant to increase fares, it seemed a smart way to help handle soaring bills over which they have little control. Metra staff announced on Wednesday that they expect diesel fuel bills for 2005 will be \$42.2 million, which is \$15.5 million more than what they anticipated when they put together the 2005 budget last year.

Likewise they expect security costs will be \$16.5 million, \$1.3 million more than what they had budgeted, thanks in part to heightened security following this summer's train bombing in London.

Metra uses a distance-based fare system, meaning the cost depends on the length of the trip. Under the proposal, a rider who travels between Zone A and Zones B, D, or E will see the price of a monthly pass increase by \$4.05 or \$5.40, requiring them to pay \$48.60 or \$64.80 more a year. For some riders, that is the

equivalent of about one tank of gas, board member Larry Huggins said.

A one-way fare for someone traveling between those same zones would jump by 15 or 20 cents. Ten-ride passes would increase by \$1.30 or \$1.70.

"It's the last thing in the world any board wants to do," said Michael Smith, the committee's chairman. But he added, "There is no way in the world we could have anticipated some of these increases."

But Smith said that even with the fare increase, Metra would still be short of funds for its operating expenses. To help cover the gap, Metra staff has again proposed using capital dollars to cover operating expenses, tapping \$32.9 million in capital, up from \$15.1 million this year.

It's a strategy that staff and board members are reluctant to adopt but have agreed to as a short-term fix while state lawmakers study how the region's transit system is funded.

Although the CTA has expressed concern in the past that raising fares could steer some riders away, Philip Pagano, Metra's executive director, is not worried. The agency expects ridership will grow by about 2 percent next year, and the railroad intends to double service on the Southwest and North Central service lines. ([www.chicago-tribune.com](http://www.chicago-tribune.com) October 20, 2005)

## • APTA NEWS

APTA held their exposition and trade show in Dallas, Texas this year. The Expo is open to walk-ins and normally has displays from every bus manufacturer selling on the North American continent. Here are a few of the buses that were on display at this year's function.



AC Transit 5001 VanHool

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## APTA



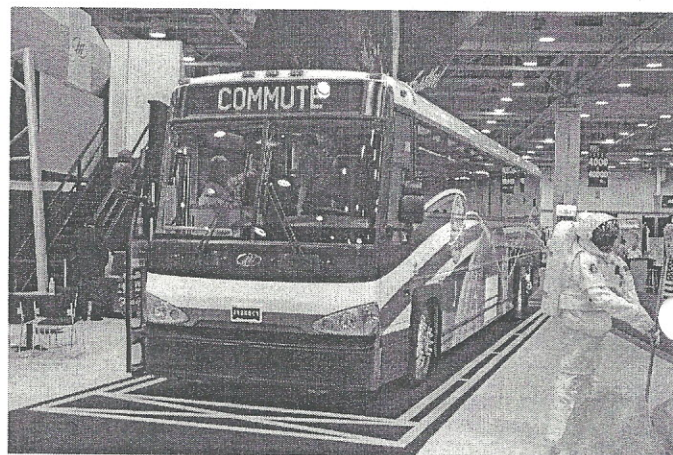
AC Transit VanHool Hydrogen Fuel Cell



Gillig Low-floor trolley bus



Blue Bird Ultra Low-floor



MCI D4500CT Commuter Coach



Blue Bird Low-floor trolley bus



Millennium RTS Suburban

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## APTA



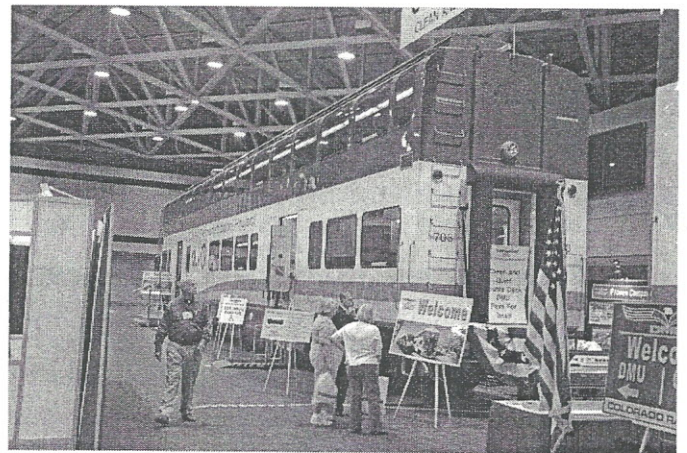
Millennium RTS Low-floor



Nova Bus Low-floor



NABI BRT Low-floor



Colorado Rail Car DMU Double deck commuter car



New Flyer Low-floor



Saw this at the old New York Bus Service garage. It must be used on low-ridership routes



- Nov 4 (Friday). The Omnibus Society of America meeting.** 7:30-10:00PM (doors close at 8:00 PM)  
 Location: Swedish Covenant Hospital -- Anderson Pavilion (2751 W. Winona Ave). (S/E corner, Winona/California -- 1 block south of intersection of Foster/California)  
 Admission: \$3.00 for non-members.  
 Program: "More musings by Mulenbach," a slide presentation by Mike Mulenbach.
- Nov 4 (Friday). Blackhawk Chapter -- NRHS meeting.** 7:30-10:00 PM  
 Location: Gladys Fox Museum (S/W corner of 9th St (Ill Rt 7)/Washington St in Lockport.  
 Admission: Free  
 Program: "The 60's-Passenger-Steam-Electrics," a film of Chicago area railroads Roger Koenig.  
 Need more information? Email: [bbmolony@juno.com](mailto:bbmolony@juno.com)
- Nov 5 (Saturday). Kenosha Streetcar Society meeting.** 7:00-9:45 PM  
 Location: Immanuel Methodist Church (54th/Sheridan - 1-1/2 blocks east of the Kenosha Metra/UP Train Station), Kenosha, WI.  
 Admission: \$5.00 for non-members.  
 Program: "Chicago Rapid Transit of the 50s" a slide presentation by Ludwig Schuerle.
- Nov 9 (Wednesday). Twentieth Century Railroad Club meeting.** 7:00-9:00 PM  
 Location: Electricians Union Hall (600 W. Washington Blvd).  
 Admission: \$3.00 for non-members.  
 Program: To be announced.
- Nov 11 (Friday). Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, Chicago Chapter meeting.** 7:00-10:00 PM  
 Location: The Chicago Temple (77 W. Washington -- 3rd Floor). (S/E corner, Washington/Clark)  
 Admission: Free.  
 Program: "A Late 1950s Steam Journey through the Midwest" (including Michigan and Canada), a slide presentation by John Djobko.
- Nov 18 (Friday). The Railroad Club of Chicago meeting.** 7:30-10:00 PM  
 Location: The Chicago Temple (77 W. Washington -- 3rd Floor). (S/E corner, Washington/Clark)  
 Admission: \$3.00 donation requested from non-members.  
 Program: "Sixty Years of Trains in Florida, Mexico and the Caribbean" a slide presentation by Jon Marton.
- Nov 25 (Friday). Central Electric Railfans' Association meeting.** 7:30-10:00 PM  
 Location: 203 W. Wacker Dr -- 2nd Floor Auditorium. (S/W corner, Wacker/Wells)  
 Admission: Free.  
 Program: "Some "Current" History of the 'L,'" a slide presentation by Lou Gerrard.
- Dec 2 (Friday). The Omnibus Society of America meeting.** 7:30-10:00PM (doors close at 8:00 PM)  
 Location: Swedish Covenant Hospital -- Anderson Pavilion (2751 W. Winona Ave). (S/E corner, Winona/California -- 1 block south of intersection of Foster/California)  
 Admission: \$3.00 for non-members.  
 Program: "Milwaukee and the MCTS" a slide presentation by local transit photographer Ed Montejano.
- Dec (Friday). Blackhawk Chapter -- NRHS meeting.** 7:30-10:00 PM  
 Location: Gladys Fox Museum (S/W corner of 9th St (Ill Rt 7)/Washington St in Lockport.  
 Admission: Free  
 Program: Annual meeting, election of officers and holiday party.  
 Need more information? Email: [bbmolony@juno.com](mailto:bbmolony@juno.com)
- Dec 9 (Friday). Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, Chicago Chapter meeting.** 7:00-10:00 PM  
 Location: The Chicago Temple (77 W. Washington -- 3rd Floor). (S/E corner, Washington/Clark)  
 Admission: Free.  
 Program: A presentation by Darwin Simaninitis.
- Dec 16 (Friday). The Railroad Club of Chicago meeting.** 7:30-10:00 PM  
 Location: The Chicago Temple (77 W. Washington -- 3rd Floor). (S/E corner, Washington/Clark)  
 Admission: \$3.00 donation requested from non-members.  
 Program: To be announced.
- Dec 23 (Friday). Central Electric Railfans' Association meeting.** 7:30-10:00 PM  
 Location: 203 W. Wacker Dr -- 2nd Floor Auditorium. (S/W corner, Wacker/Wells)  
 Admission: Free.  
 Program: "The Last Days of Pole Cars in Evanston -- 1971-1972," a slide presentation by Jack Doyle.