

Green Pennant Special

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC. NOVEMBER 2007

On October 7th, the Chicagoland Historical Bus Museum has a ride-in to River Valley Metro, the local transit operator in Kankakee, as well as the operator of the bus between the University Park Metra station and Kankakee.

Our group rode the Metra Electric to University Park station where we transferred to River Valley Metro bus 9015 for our ride to Kankakee.

Here are a few photos taken on the trip.



The Bus we rode between University Park Metra station and Kankakee.



One of the local route buses in Kankakee just departing the lineup point. This is one of three low-floor Gilligs that River Valley Metro operates.



One of the Blue Bird Transits? Used on the Kankakee local routes.



River Valley Metro 9012. Ex- Bi-State same number.



Our attendees for the day. The bus that was used to travel around Kankakee was CHBM 928 ex-CyRide from Ames, Iowa same number.

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". 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.

The OSA has begun to offer for purchase photo DVD's containing scanned images of slides and photographs from the collection of Melvin Bernero.

The DVD's contain close to 300 images each and the current offerings consist of: CTA buses (color and black & white on one DVD); Northern Illinois (color and black & white on one DVD); CTA/CSL streetcars (black & white); CTA 'L'/Subway (color and black & white on one DVD); Transit Properties of Wisconsin (color and black & white on one DVD) and Chicago Trolleybuses (color and black & white on one DVD).

All the DVD's are priced at \$15.00 and can be purchased at any OSA meeting from Melvin. We are also offering them by mail.

All funds raised by the sale of these DVD's go into the OSA general fund to help support the Omnibus Society of America.

• NOVEMBER OSA MEETING

The November meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on November 3, 2006, 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 "Ontario Transit," will be a slide presentation by Don Ellison on transit in the Province of Ontario – primarily featuring Brantford, Kitchener, St. Catherine and Woodstock (and maybe a little Hamilton).

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.

The terms of John LeBeau and David Zucker on the OSA Board of Directors are expiring in 2007. If any member in good standing wishes to run for a seat on our board, please notify any director before, or at, the November membership meeting.

• CTA CORNER

The Chicago Transit Authority received permission on Wednesday, October 11, 2006, to issue up to \$275 million in revenue bonds to help pay for new rail cars and buses and to continue capital improvement projects.

The money will be used to help pay for 406 new rail cars with aisle-facing seating that the CTA will receive beginning in 2009.

The new buses include standard-sized buses and smaller ones that are easier to maneuver on narrow streets.

Other projects include renovation of the Howard and Wilson stations on the Red Line, rehabilitation of older rail cars, tracks and signal upgrades, and the installation of fiber-optic cables, officials said. (www.chicagotribune.com 10/13/2006)

On October 18, 2006, the Chicago Transit Board permanently adopted midday and weekend service hours on the #X80 Irving Park Express and approved a 180-day experiment that will modify the #37 Sedgwick route and combine it with the #11 Lincoln route to create the #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick route.

Permanent status for the #X80 and adjustments to the #37 and #11 result directly from the CTA monitoring and evaluation of route performance and customer feedback.

The midday and weekend hours on the #X80 Irving Park Express route become permanent as ridership during these hours has continued to improve since the midday and weekend services were implemented.



(Cont. from page 2)

CTA

The express route provides customers who wish to travel between the lakefront and the Red, Brown and Blue lines with more travel options. July weekday ridership shows an increase of 22 percent from last year; Saturday ridership increased by 17 percent and Sunday/holiday ridership increased 52 percent.

Midday service on the #X80 operates from approximately 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with weekend service operating from approximately 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. making limited stops on Irving Park between the Irving Park Blue Line station and Lake Shore Drive.

The Board also approved changes to the #37 Sedgwick and #11 Lincoln. The CTA is combining the routes to operate as the #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick to better serve customers travel needs because the two routes parallel each other along substantial portions of the route.

Customers of the new #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick route will benefit from the combined service areas of the current routes, offering extended service north of Fullerton for current #37 customers and extended service south of North Avenue during peak hours for current #11 customers.

Additionally, during peak hours the new #11 will extend west along Van Buren from Franklin to Clinton to create a direct connection to the #38 Ogden/Taylor, for service to the West Side and the Illinois Medical District.

The CTA will operate the new #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick as a 180-day experiment, which will begin in December. With the creation of the new #11 route, CTA will eliminate the current #37 Sedgwick (www.transitchicago.com 10/18/06)

• PACE PATTER

Pace is considering a 75-cent fare increase and midday service reductions on its Route 712 Wheaton Shuttle, which operates between the Wheaton Metra Station, downtown Wheaton and the DuPage County Complex.

The proposed changes were the subject of a public hearing on Monday, October 16, 2006. It was the second hearing seeking comments on improving Route 712's performance. A hearing last December resulted in no changes.

The Wheaton Shuttle offers 22 westbound trips from the Metra station each weekday starting at 7:20 a.m. and 20 return trips, ending at 5:38 p.m. Average daily ridership on the shuttle is about 60.

The shuttle began operating in 1979 at Metra's request to link the station to the DuPage complex. Metra subsidized 75 percent of the operating costs but dropped the subsidy in 2003, citing low ridership.

The current fare of 25 cents covers only 6 percent of the route's operating costs, compared with a systemwide standard of nearly 40 percent from fare-box revenues, Pace said.

Without a subsidy, Pace is looking for other ways to produce more revenue. Raising the fare to \$1.00 would make it consistent with other shuttle services, and reducing the number of Midday trips would help to reduce operating expenses. (www.chicagotribune.com 10/13/2006)

Suburban bus officials and the Kane County Board need to work together once a new jail is completed to keep inmates from wandering nearby streets and highways after they are released, Batavia's mayor said on Tuesday, October 10, 2006.

Jeff Schielke said he knows firsthand that the new jail being built at the county's Judicial Center west of Randall Road will experience the same problems that occur around the existing jail on Fabyan Parkway unless there is regular, coordinated Pace bus service.

Schielke said it is common to find former inmates walking along Fabyan Parkway and Randall Road looking for transportation or asking for money from nearby businesses to make telephone calls.

Schielke said the planned expansion of service on the Pace bus route on Randall Road, which already includes a stop at the Judicial Center, could be adjusted and coordinated to include regular stops at the new jail, set to open in January 2008.

County Board member James Mitchell (R-North Aurora), chairman of the board's Judicial and Public Safety Committee, which is overseeing the jail project, said coordinated release of inmates who require public transportation is in the works. (www.chicagotribune.com 10/11/2006)

• METRA MATTERS

The recent expansion of service on three Metra routes along with eye-popping fuel prices have helped boost ridership levels to a recent high, officials said on September 15, 2006.

For the first seven months of the year, Metra recorded 46.1 million passenger trips, the most ever for that time frame in its 22-year history. The number is a 5.4 percent increase over last year and surpasses the previous record set in 2001 by about 6,000 trips, said Lynette Ciavarella, Metra's director of planning and analysis.

Some of the biggest gains were on the North Central Service Line, where weekday service more than doubled this year, and the Union Pacific West and South West Service Lines, which were extended in January. (Cont on page 4)

(Cont from page 3)

METRA

Major downtown events and construction on the Dan Ryan Expressway also played a role, Ciavarella said.

Metra Board members said the agency must focus on maintaining the ridership, especially with gas prices starting to decline.



As part of that effort, Metra hopes to improve communications with customers through a \$6.8 million project to upgrade passenger information displays at its five downtown stations. It will install about 100 new screens in stations and on platforms that list trains, times and track numbers along with a large display board that will alert customers to delays.

The new system makes it easier to add information, so Metra should be able to provide updated details about incidents more quickly, said William Tupper, Metra's chief engineer. Such information is critical for passengers who need to make alternate plans if there is a significant problem on a route, like an incident in June that shut down the Burlington Northern Santa Fe line for nearly four hours.

Metra will start installing the boards in March at Union Station. By August 2008, they should be in place at all five downtown stations, Tupper said. (www.chicagotribune.com 09/16/2006)

Metra has unveiled a 2007 budget that relies heavily on an infusion of new money from Springfield.

No fare increases are called for in the \$554 million spending plan released on Friday, October 13, 2006.

Metra, CTA and Pace, under the umbrella of the Regional Transportation Authority, are campaigning for legislators in Springfield to pour additional billions of dollars into public transportation next year.

Metra officials said service is being jeopardized by the continued diversion of capital funds for operating purposes.

This year, more than \$68 million in capital funding for equipment, maintenance and infrastructure was diverted; next year, Metra predicts that \$71 million could be diverted.

"Equipment breakdowns, slow zones and deteriorating facilities will begin to increase, and we will enter a downward spiral of diminished service and reduced ridership," Metra Chairwoman Carole Doris said in a budget statement.

State Rep. Julie Hamos (D-Evanston), who chairs the House Mass Transit Committee, said Springfield will be receptive to the plight of the transit agencies. "I think the legislature will take a hard look at the issue," Hamos said. (www.chicagotribune.com 10/15/2006)

Comment: Don't hold your breath.

• RTA CORNER

Metra officials announced on Friday, October 13, 2006, they will be short \$64 million next year, pushing the total red ink for Chicago Transit services to \$277-million and ratcheting up pressure on lawmakers to raise taxes to prevent fare hikes and service cuts.

To come up with that kind of cash, lawmakers would have to consider substantial tax hikes. A half-percent sales tax hike in the collar counties would raise only about \$240 million, and a 5-cent regional gas tax could generate about \$175 million.

In addition to Metra's shortfall, Pace needs \$22.9 million for suburban operations and \$81 million for Chicago para-transit services. The CTA says it needs about \$110 million.

But the agencies also say the Chicago area needs considerably more to expand and maintain the region's rail and bus system – roughly \$14 billion over the next five to ten years.

To come up with such a high figure, lawmakers will be hard pressed to uncover a politically palatable source.

The yearly injection of operating funds being sought is nearly half of the \$772 million they currently cull from sales taxes in the Chicago region. Cook County shoppers pay 1 percent to transit and collar county shoppers pay a quarter percent. Fares generally pay for about half of the agencies' operating budgets.

Moreover, the \$14 billion figure is about six times more than the \$2.5 billion the transit agencies got from the last state expansion and upgrade program. Illinois FIRST, which ran out of money two years ago.

2006 OSA Auction
Friday, November 3, 2006
7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Prior to the beginning of the November Membership Meeting, OSA will conduct an auction.

1. Sellers must be an OSA member in good standing.
2. Sellers will be charged a \$10.00 participation fee.
3. Starting at 7:00 PM, sellers will have 30 minutes to set up their merchandise on the auditorium stage.
4. Starting at 7:30 PM, buyers will have 30 minutes to view and purchase any merchandise on display.
5. All merchandise available for sale must be hobby related.
6. All transactions are between the sellers and the buyers.
7. Buyers need not be OSA members.
8. The \$4.00 admission charged to non-members will be waved.
9. Transactions to be completed by 8:00 PM.
10. During the hour the auction is in progress, venders will not be allowed to display or sell merchandise unless they have paid the participation fee. If the fee is paid, rule #5 will apply. Participating venders who normally occupy a table at the back of the room may continue to do so.
11. No OSA sponsored merchandise will be sold while the auction is in progress. However, membership dues will be accepted.
12. Following the auction, there will be a 15-minute intermission while sellers remove any unsold merchandise and non-participating venders set up their displays.
13. In the event a clarification of these procedures is required, the interpretation of the Program Director (in his absence the Gatekeeper) will be final.

The regular November meeting will begin at 8:15 PM. Please note the hospital closes the entrance doors at 8:00 PM.

(Kenosha Streetcar Society annual Christmas Pizza Party. Details on other side.)



KENOSHA
STREETCAR SOCIETY



2006 Annual Christmas Pizza Party

- When:** Saturday, December 2, 2006
- Time:** 5:00 P.M. until 8:00 P.M.
- Where:** Immanuel Methodist Church, 54th & Sheridan Road, Kenosha, WI.
- Directions:** From I-94, go right at second Kenosha exit, Wisconsin Route #158 (52nd St). East to Sheridan Road. Turn right (south) two blocks to church. Parking available at both west and east lots. Side entrance is at north side of building.
- Dinner Served:** 6:00 P.M. until 6:30 P.M.
- Entertainment:** Streetcar videos, while sipping hot apple cider.
- Menu:** Pa's Famous Kenosha Pizza, beverage, and dessert (hot dogs for kids who don't like pizza.)
- Cost:** Members \$5.00, non-members \$8.00, children under 12 years, free.

Candy Cane Special

Come ride with Santa on two Christmas decorated streetcars with free candy canes for all the kids. Santa will be on one car, and Mrs. Santa will be on the other car, with live music. Watch Scrooge argue with the old time conductor about the 25¢ fare being too high.

- Time:** 1:00 P.M. until 4:00 P.M.
- Fare:** 25¢ – Board streetcars at the Transit Center (one block east of the Immanuel Methodist Church) or at any stops along the line.

Kenosha Christmas Tree Lighting

- Time:** 4:00 P.M.
- Place:** Kenosha Public Museum (west side and south of fountain) 5500 1st Avenue--on the streetcar line.
- Listen to Christmas Carols and watch as Santa lights the city Christmas Tree.