



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

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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.

• FEBRUARY OSA MEETING

The February meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on February 2, 2007, 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 "*Transit Classics*" will be a slide presentation presented by Bruce Moffat

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.

• CTA CORNER

CTA Bus Service Improvements Take Effect this Weekend

The Chicago Transit Authority will implement a new bus route and enhance existing bus routes beginning Sunday as part of efforts to improve service for CTA customers. The service changes are the result of customer feedback, as well as observation and analysis by CTA staff.

The new **#11 Lincoln/Sedgwick** combines the current #37 Sedgwick route with the #11 Lincoln route. The new #11

Lincoln/Sedgwick route will cover 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 the morning and evening rush period for current #11 customers.

Additionally, during the morning and evening rush the #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick will extend downtown west along Van Buren from Wells to Clinton to create a direct connection to the #38 Ogden/Taylor and the Clinton Blue Line station for service to the West Side and the Illinois Medical District.

The #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick will begin service as a 180-day experiment on Sunday, December 31. Morning and evening rush period service to downtown on the #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick will begin Tuesday, January 2, 2007. With the modification of the #11 route, CTA will eliminate the current #37 Sedgwick.

Service on the **#14 Jeffery Express** will begin earlier on Saturdays at approximately 6:00 a.m. instead of 6:30 a.m. northbound and on Sundays at approximately 7:10 a.m. instead of 7:30 a.m. northbound. In addition, service on Saturdays will end 12 minutes later at approximately 9:39 p.m. southbound. More frequent Saturday service will be provided from 7:45 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. with buses approximately every 12 minutes. Enhancements will begin Sunday, December 31.

#84 Peterson will provide earlier Sunday service with the first bus leaving 30 minutes earlier in both directions—approximately 7:30 a.m. instead of 8:00 a.m. eastbound and 8:00 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. westbound. Enhancements will begin Sunday, December 31.

#90 Harlem will provide later service on Saturday with the last southbound bus leaving at approximately 9:20 p.m. instead of 9:05 p.m. and the last northbound bus leaving at approximately 10:05 p.m. instead of 9:50 p.m. Enhancements will begin Saturday, January 6, 2007.

#91 Austin will provide earlier weekend service with the first southbound bus leaving at approximately 5:45 a.m. instead of 6:05 a.m. and the first northbound bus leaving at approximately 6:30 a.m. rather than 6:50 a.m. on Saturdays. On Sundays, the first southbound bus will depart at approximately 7:25 a.m. instead of 7:45 a.m. and the first northbound bus will depart at approximately 8:05 a.m. instead of 8:25 a.m. Enhancements will begin Sunday, December 31.

(Cont on page 2)

CTA

Last month, the Chicago Transit Board approved a 180-day experiment for a new bus route. The **#132 Goose Island Express** route will operate between the Clybourn Metra station at Cortland and Ashland avenues and the Metra Van Buren station at Van Buren Street and Michigan Avenue during weekday rush periods.

The **#132 Goose Island Express** will stop at Metra's Union Station and Ogilvie Transportation Center and provide connections to the CTA's Blue Line station at Grand and Halsted and the Red Line station at North/Clybourn. The new service is scheduled to begin Tuesday, January 2, 2007.

#147 Outer Drive Express will provide more frequent weekday service from 6:30 p.m. to 12:20 a.m. with buses every 8 to 15 minutes instead of every 10 to 20 minutes. Enhancements will begin Tuesday, January 2, 2007.

www.transitchicago.com.

CTA Announces Brown Line Kimball Station to Reopen January 12

Chicago Transit Authority officials today announced that the Kimball station on the Brown Line will reopen to rail service at 4 a.m. on Friday, January 12.

"We are pleased to announce that after nearly four months of renovation work, Kimball station will reopen this Friday, a few days earlier than promised," said CTA President Frank Kruesi. "The overall project remains on time and on budget and when completed in 2009, CTA customers will reap the benefits of increased capacity along the Brown Line and accessible, state-of-the-art stations."

A major portion of the reconstruction has been completed at Kimball including brighter lighting, installation of heaters and windbreaks, new benches and an information kiosk.

Construction crews will continue to work in the weeks ahead to complete construction even after the station opens for service. Additional work includes installing permanent station signs, security cameras, original artwork, windows, canopies and continuing work to complete the extension of the platform.

Kimball is the third newly renovated station to reopen as part of the Brown Line capacity expansion project. Francisco station, which also closed with Kimball on September 15, will reopen for service in March. In August 2006, the Kedzie and Rockwell stations reopened for service following a six-month temporary closure.

"We appreciate our customers' patience during these temporary closures and will continue to work to keep inconveniences to a minimum while completing construction at this station," added Kruesi.

Over the course of the project, nine other stations on the line are also subject to temporary closure at different points during construction. Work will be scheduled so that no two consecutive stations are closed at the same time on weekdays. Temporary closures are necessary in order to have the type of access needed to extend platforms, make stations accessible, stay within budget and keep the project on schedule.

As the project continues to move forward, CTA remains committed to staying within the budget and meeting the completion dates required. The project's Full Funding Grant Agreement with the federal government requires that the CTA complete the project by the end of 2009.

The Brown Line capacity expansion project includes: the rehabilitation of 18 Brown Line stations; lengthening station platforms to accommodate eight rather than six-car trains; provide for station enhancements to meet the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and upgrade or replace traction power, signal and communication equipment.

Operating between downtown and the Northwest Side, the Brown Line was originally constructed in two phases, opening for service in 1900 and 1907. The line is the third busiest of CTA's rail lines, serving more than 66,000 customers each weekday, with 19 stations from Kimball on the north to the downtown Chicago Loop.

CTA Outlines Plans for Three-Track Operation This Spring

Customers Warned of Delays Advised to Leave Early, Leave Late or Alternate

Today CTA officials reported that the proposed shift to three-track operation this spring in the rail corridor between Armitage and Addison (Red Line) will result in more crowded trains and longer commutes for customers on the Brown Line, Purple Line Express and north branch of the Red Line. With approximately 1,000 trains and 185,000 customers traveling through it each day, the corridor is the most heavily trafficked area on the CTA rail system.

While construction is underway, trains serving the Belmont and Fullerton stations will have to share three tracks instead of four. Although trains will continue to stop at the stations, one of the four tracks along the platforms at each station must be taken out of service while the platform is rebuilt and tracks are reconfigured to allow room for elevators to be installed. The specific track to be taken out of service will vary during the course of the project.

The construction is part of the Brown Line capacity expansion project which, when completed, will allow the CTA to accommodate more customers in this busy and growing corridor and will make all Brown Line stations accessible to people with disabilities.

Just as motorists are advised to contend with lane closures and congestion for construction on the Dan Ryan Expressway last year, we want to make sure that our customers have been notified in advance so they can plan their commutes during three-track operation," said Chicago Transit Board Chairman Carole Brown. "We will provide as much service as we can operate safely, but our capacity will be greatly reduced. Customers should expect very crowded conditions and longer commutes, especially during rush hours. Although this is not welcome news, the work is necessary to improve capacity to meet growing demand. We feel it is important to maintain service for our customers during construction even though the level of service will be compromised."

"Since the inception of the Brown Line capacity expansion project in 1998, three-track operation has been a part of the construction plan which is why we have done the preparatory work over the last 18 months to add crossover tracks and update signals throughout this corridor and construct new tracks at Belmont and Fullerton. This work has laid the groundwork to safely operate rail service on one less track than normal. By having more locations where we can move trains from one track to another, we will be able to keep trains running and keep both the Belmont and Fullerton stations open to customers while construction is underway," said CTA President Frank Kruesi. "But losing one track will result in more crowded trains and increased commute times regardless of the operational adjustments that will be made and it is important for our customers to know that in advance and be prepared. During the evening rush, capacity will be reduced by 25 percent, which is the equivalent of more than 17,400 customers, so we recommend that customers plan ahead."

Kruesi advised that customers, especially those who currently travel during rush hours, plan to leave earlier or later, or that they consider alternate services such as CTA buses, other CTA rail routes such as the Blue Line or Metra trains.

Providing rail service with 25 percent less track capacity will present significant challenges. Due to the reduced capacity, CTA will operate fewer trains. During the first phase of work, the greatest impact will be evident during evening rush hour because three northbound lines will share one track at Fullerton and Belmont. As a result, during evening rush hours (3 – 6:30 p.m.), the CTA will have approximately 25 percent less capacity – the equivalent of more than 17,400 customers if trains were fully loaded. Thirty one fewer northbound Purple

Express, Red and Brown Line trains will operate during this time.

Morning rush will also be congested because the number of southbound Purple Express, Red and Brown Line trains will be reduced by 16 trains. In terms of customer capacity it translates to approximately 13 percent less capacity, or space for 8,600 fewer rail customers.

To help alleviate crowding on platforms and to provide choices for customers, Purple Line Express trains will join Brown Line trains on the outer track in the Loop. This will enable customers to board either route. To the extent possible, the CTA also recommends that customers plan to leave earlier or later, and allow extra travel time. The CTA also recommends that customers consider alternate service such as nearby bus routes, other CTA rail lines such as the Blue Line or Metra trains. CTA plans to increase the frequency of service on several existing bus routes serving the corridor to help accommodate rail customers who may choose to switch to nearby bus service.

The newly installed Clark Junction signal system is being configured to manage the increased volume of train traffic on fewer tracks through the corridor and operational staff is being trained to coordinate traffic through the reconfigured junction. Three-track operation is tentatively scheduled to begin on Monday, April 2, 2007 and continue until the Brown Line capacity expansion project is completed in 2009, however, Kruesi said the start date will not be finalized until all signals and crossover work is completed and passes tests for reliability.

On an average weekday just over 108,000 rides are provided on the north branch of the Red Line, 66,000 on the Brown Line when traffic at the Belmont and Fullerton stations are added in, and 10,000 rides provided by the Purple Line Express service, not including Evanston.

Skokie Swift expansion inches closer

By Dan Gibbard and Andrew Schroedter
Tribune staff reporters
Published January 8, 2007, 12:02 AM CST

Talked about for four decades but with nothing accomplished, an expansion of the Skokie Swift rapid transit line could hardly have moved any slower.

But with the long-sought addition of a new downtown station on Oakton Street looking like a sure thing, Skokie officials believe the time might have come to extend the Swift, also known as the Chicago Transit Authority's Yellow Line, to a new train station near Old Orchard mall.

Any extension is still years away at best, but with CTA officials going to Skokie this week for a site survey, village leaders say they have never been more optimistic.

"It's long-range, but it's more in the realm of possibility than ever before, I think," said Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen, who estimated the cost of the Old Orchard extension at \$100 million. "The success we've had in one area perhaps breeds a little bit of optimism that we can succeed in the second one."

The CTA's last expansion in the North Shore was in 1964, when it began running the Swift on the tracks of the old North Shore railroad, which went bust in the mid-1950s.

Proposals to extend the line go back to at least 1965, Tribune archives show, when the Skokie Valley Transportation Council, an ad hoc committee of North Shore towns, recommended an Old Orchard stop.

In 1985 a Tribune editorial warned that suburban traffic would worsen and asked, "Whatever happened to the plans to extend the Skokie Swift from Dempster Street to Old Orchard?"

Until recently, not much.

But in 2003 Skokie did a study that helped persuade the CTA to include the project in a request for federal "New Starts" funding earmarked for congestion-easing transit projects that year. Now the agency has launched a formal study process, and consultants will travel to the village to get a tour of what has changed since the '03 study.

"We've worked hard to push for support among congressional delegations and others to get on this list and to work to secure funding," said CTA spokeswoman Robyn Ziegler.

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), who pushed for funding of the CTA study, spoke confidently.

"When the first project is complete [at Oakton Street], we'll go all the way to Old Orchard," she predicted. "I think this is going to be an enormous boost to the local economy."

For now, the Skokie Swift runs non-stop between Howard Street in Chicago and Dempster Street in Skokie, with about 2,500 riders a day boarding at Dempster. The \$15 million stop at Oakton, near the Illinois Science + Technology Park, could debut as early as 2008.

Skokie planners have identified three possible sites for an Old Orchard station: on the west side of the Edens Expressway, where the old North Shore line used to run; just east of the expressway, next to Niles North High

School; and in the mall's parking lot, near Bloomingdale's.

The line would probably need to be elevated or laid out in some way to keep the trains from crossing busy thoroughfares at street level, especially Dempster, said Steve Marciani, the village's planning supervisor.

Officials believe demand for the added stop is strong, as Skokie stores, hotels and businesses located north of Golf Road employ more than 11,000 people, he said.

The new line would whisk shoppers, employees and others to Westfield Shoppingtown Old Orchard, the Cook County courthouse and other nearby office and retail developments.

"The whole corridor is very busy," Van Dusen said. "A lot of employers have told us they would like it because they pick up their employees at Dempster."

At Old Orchard, the idea went over well among workers, managers and shoppers.

Carrie Dunham, manager at The Limited, said not having a viable rapid transit system makes it difficult for her to recruit workers who don't live nearby.

Many of her employees live in Chicago but would prefer working at The Limited store at Water Tower Place because they can ride the CTA to work, Dunham said.

"I think [the extension] is a good idea," she said. "We don't have public transportation out here. There's a bus, but it stops at a certain point and stops running at night."

The Yellow Line doesn't only shuttle people from Chicago to the suburbs. Philip Luu, 17, said he lives in Skokie but rides the Yellow Line to Chicago to hang out with friends and volunteer.

Because the train doesn't stop near his school, Luu, a senior at Niles North, takes a bus to Dempster, then rides the Swift to Howard. There, he switches to the Red Line, which carries him south into the city.

The Yellow Line extension would eliminate the bus leg of the journey, which Luu said he would welcome, especially in the winter or when buses are running late.

"That would really be nice," said Luu's friend Mohini Ghale, 18, of Skokie. "We'd have a straight line to the Red Line and to go downtown."

Skokie, meanwhile, "would like to see public transportation because it takes cars off the road," Van Dusen said. "Anything we can do to ease congestion is a good thing."

The extension's estimated cost would include

engineering studies, equipment and land acquisition, Van Dusen said. The \$100 million estimate is for an above-ground line, he said, and tunneling would bump it higher.

It's too early to worry about exactly how to fund the project, village officials said, but it's clear the federal and state governments would have to pick up the lion's share of the tab.

Before the CTA can secure federal funding, the agency must demonstrate that a formal process of planning and design has been followed.

Ziegler said the extension proposal is in its earliest stage, known as alternatives analysis. In this phase, engineers study "traffic generators"—where people live, where they go and how they get there—as well as possible routes, station locations, ridership estimates, costs and what other transportation options are available.

The analysis takes at least two years to complete and is one of four the CTA has in the works, along with proposed extensions of the Orange and Red Lines and creation of a new downtown Circle Line.

- **PACE PATTER**

- **METRA MATTERS**

Railway company to install long-sought safety gear
GPS-based system gets U.S. approval

By Richard Wronski

Tribune staff reporter

Published January 9, 2007

Marking what it called a "new era of rail safety," the federal government on Monday gave the go-ahead for the BNSF Railway Co. to install a high-tech system in its locomotives that is designed to prevent train collisions and accidents by overriding mistakes by engineers and automatically controlling train speed.

The Federal Railroad Administration's action was the first approval issued for a so-called positive train control system since the agency revised its regulations in 2005 to incorporate new digital communication and satellite-based technology.

Experts say approval means the government is satisfied that longstanding technical glitches have been resolved.

Although Monday's action covers only BNSF freight lines, other rail lines are expected to adopt similar safety systems.

For several years, Amtrak has been testing the PTC technology on routes in Illinois, southwest Michigan and its Northeast Corridor.

Metra plans to install the same system used by BNSF on its commuter rail lines.

The National Transportation Safety Board has included positive train control on its annual "most wanted" list of recommendations since 1990.

Last month, the NTSB said a PTC system would have prevented the Sept. 17, 2005, derailment on Metra's Rock Island line that killed two passengers and injured 117 people.

The federal rail agency approved the BNSF plan to install the Electronic Train Management System, or ETMS, manufactured by Wabtec Corp. of Wilmerding, Pa., on 35 freight lines in 17 states, including Illinois. Installation will begin in spring.

"This is a major achievement that marks the beginning of a new era of rail safety," Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Boardman said in a statement Monday. "The steps [the FRA] and railroads are taking show that applying PTC technology can work and will provide important safety benefits."

ETMS uses a global positioning system on locomotives, signal sensors, and onboard computers to track the trains' speed and location.

BNSF would not say how much the system would cost, a spokesman said. However, Metra estimates that ETMS would cost about \$300 million to \$500 million to install on its commuter lines.

In this issue of The Green Pennant Special we travel further back in time to show some of the older equipment once operated by Pace and the RTA when first formed.



West Towns 836



Joliet 201



Nortran 457



Melrose Park 402



RTA/Nortran 141



Niles 468



DuPage 3430