



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

JUNE 2007

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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.

• JUNE OSA MEETING

The June meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on June 1, 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 "*South Suburban Transit in the Private Era*" will be a slide presentation presented by John Lebeau

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

Chicago Transit Board Names Ron Huberman as New CTA President

05/01/07

The Chicago Transit Board today appointed Ron Huberman as the new President of the Chicago Transit Authority.

Huberman had been Mayor Richard M. Daley's Chief of Staff for the last two years and previously served as Executive Director of the Office of Emergency Management and Communications.

"We are delighted that Ron is joining CTA and are eager to move forward with efforts to address the agency's immediate funding issue," said Chicago Transit Board Chairman Carole Brown. "His experience in City government should serve him well as he works with us to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the second largest transit agency in the country."

"I appreciate the support expressed by members of the Chicago Transit Board," said Huberman. "Even with the cuts in spending and management improvements that have already been put in place, it's evident to me that we need to make even tougher financial decisions in the days and weeks ahead. It is vital that Chicago's public transportation system be financially sound and healthy and I look forward to taking the CTA the next step of the way."

www.transitchicago.com

CTA chief clips 49 jobs for now

By Jon Hilkevitch

Tribune transportation reporter

Published May 11, 2007

On his 10th day on the job Thursday, CTA President Ron Huberman nibbled at non-essential internal expenses, announcing \$12.5 million in administrative cuts from the transit agency's \$1.1 billion annual operating budget.

CTA customers will not feel the pinch from the elimination of 49 positions -- of which 31 are already vacant -- and other cutbacks at the agency's glass-and-steel headquarters downtown, Huberman said, calling the cuts just the beginning. The CTA has more than 11,000 employees.

No frontline jobs, like bus drivers, train operators, janitors or maintenance workers, were slashed, Huberman said, adding, however, that service cuts are still on the table later this year if the legislature does not approve additional transit funding to plug a \$110 million budget shortfall.

Transit oversight groups praised Huberman's cost-cutting effort, but they said major savings can be achieved only by the CTA aggressively holding down costs related to salaries, health care and pension benefits provided to retirees, who currently make no contributions to their health insurance plan. The CTA pension is only about 35 percent funded.

"The General Assembly has passed legislation requiring the CTA pension be at a 90 percent funded ratio by 2058. Unless the CTA finds new revenues or substantially reduces labor costs, these funds must come from service cuts," said Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation of Chicago.

The jobs that Huberman yanked from the CTA payroll Thursday range from more than a dozen manager posts to nine unionized jobs, including secretaries, clerks and typists, at a total annual savings of \$3.8 million, officials said. Some affected employees who have good work records could be reassigned, Huberman said.

Most of the remaining savings would come from an estimated \$7 million reduction in overtime pay.

The \$7 million represents about 20 percent of what is typically spent on overtime annually at the CTA, officials said.

Also being pared are advertising expenditures, miscellaneous administrative spending and employee travel, and purchasing practices will be reformed to better manage cash flow, Huberman said.

"What we are doing at the CTA is tightening the belt everywhere we can," Huberman said at a news conference at CTA headquarters, 567 W. Lake St.

"The CTA has to show its riders, Chicago's taxpayers and the legislature that we are doing a better job managing the resources we currently have," he said.

The CTA faces a \$110 million operating shortfall in 2007. The agency, along with Metra and Pace, is counting on a \$226 million bailout from Springfield.

The Regional Transportation Authority, meanwhile, is calling on the General Assembly to provide \$400 million in annual operating funds for transit and \$10 billion in new capital funds over the next five years.

RTA Executive Director Stephen Schlickman said Huberman's administrative cuts "definitely send the right message that we need to make tough decisions."

While agreeing with a recent state audit that called for reforms and belt-tightening by the CTA, Metra and Pace in concert with increases in state transit funding, Schlickman said, "I don't think there is a lot more to be cut out of the CTA's administrative costs. Eventually you

will be cutting into the bone."

Schlickman on Thursday sent a letter to the three transit agencies asking them to produce plans for possible service cuts and fare increases to take effect July 1 if the state does not authorize additional funding.

Huberman said his top priority at the CTA is to focus on safety, consistency of service and cleanliness. But he indicated the CTA would continue to cut costs to demonstrate to state legislators the transit agency's commitment to operating like a business while striving for high performance.

A consultant that the CTA hired in 2005 to identify cost savings came up with \$159 million in suggested cuts and efficiencies. But \$111 million of the projected savings would require changes in the CTA's collective-bargaining agreements or legislation.

jhilkevitch@tribune.com
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• PACE Patter

ANOTHER CHANCE TO LET PACE KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE SERVICE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 4, 2007

Watch for surveys on buses May 9, 10 and 12
If you ride one of the more than 200 bus routes Pace operates throughout the six counties of northeastern Illinois, you're going to have yet another chance to let them know how you feel about the service. On Wednesday, May 9, Thursday, May 10 and Saturday, May 12, surveys that are part of a major customer satisfaction study are going to be available on Pace buses. They can be completed and returned to the driver or returned in a postage-paid envelope. Riders who participated in a telephone survey earlier in the year helped develop this latest survey by letting Pace know what factors of their traveling experience were most important to them. In addition to basic information about where, when and why people use the service, questions are asked about timeliness, courtesy, transfers, safety and the availability and accuracy of travel information. All information provided through the survey is confidential.

The onboard surveys come on the heels of a recently completed round of public forums to gather input for Pace's South Cook County - Will County Initiative and just as public meetings with City of Chicago ADA paratransit riders have been concluded. Pace officials say they count on riders for feedback as the best way to know what needs to be done with their system; what

they learn through the survey process will be used to make service as convenient as possible.

• METRA Matters

Transit funding lamented

More state support crucial, agencies say

By Richard Wronski
Tribune staff reporter
Published May 4, 2007

Frustrated regional transit officials all but conceded Thursday that their strategy for winning a major increase in state funding by building grass-roots consensus has failed so far.

Transportation funding is "not even on anybody's radar" in Springfield, said new Regional Transportation Authority Board member Judy Baar Topinka, a former legislator, state treasurer and gubernatorial candidate.

Transit officials warned that fare increases, service cuts and further diversion of capital funds to pay for day-to-day operating needs will be necessary unless the state legislature heeds calls for new funding.

While reluctant to declare a "doomsday scenario" yet, top officials of the CTA, Metra and Pace joined RTA leaders in asserting that unless legislators act this spring, the agencies will be forced to revise their 2007 budgets that counted on \$226 million in state funding for operating costs.

"It's clear northeast Illinois stands on the edge of an abyss," RTA Chairman Jim Reilly said. He predicted that the suburbs and collar counties would feel the brunt of the cuts, as opposed to previous years when the focus of funding shortfalls fell on the CTA. Future transportation projects, such as the suburb-to-suburb STAR rail line, are also jeopardized, Reilly said.

Separately, the seven county chairmen in northeastern Illinois, a coalition of business and labor representatives and the region's comprehensive planning agency on Thursday also reiterated the need for more transportation and infrastructure funding. With only weeks left in the legislative session, the groups urged Gov. Rod Blagojevich and lawmakers to act.

RTA officials have long endeavored to build grass-roots consensus for a long-term transportation funding program. This was the philosophy behind "Moving Beyond Congestion," the RTA's first strategic plan, which it began formulating more than a year ago.

It on Thursday frustration over their failure to budge legislators or the governor was obvious. Warning that "the moment of crisis in 2007 is upon us," RTA

Executive Director Steve Schlickman said the \$226 million is vital for the transit agencies to meet their current budgets. In addition, the RTA is calling for \$400 million in annual operating funds and \$10 billion in new capital funds over the next five years.

Legislators in Springfield have been stymied by Blagojevich's plan for a \$7 billion business tax increase to launch his sweeping health-care plan and increase school funding. Blagojevich said transportation would not be considered until the other issues are addressed.

Schlickman called Blagojevich's insistence on levying a gross-receipts tax on business to fund his plans "the boulder in front of us."

Doug Whitley, president of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce and co-chairman of the Transportation for Illinois Coalition, agreed, saying that "when the wheels come off the gross receipts tax," transportation and other issues will be dealt with.

Without new transportation funding by July 1 to plug budget gaps, the commuting public will see higher fares and fewer buses in 2008, if not sooner, officials said. No specific cuts have been proposed yet, but "everything is on the table," Schlickman said.

Metra has already prepared a 2007 contingency budget that diverts \$60 million into everyday operations from basic maintenance, replacement of aging rail cars and tracks, and new signals, Executive Director Phil Pagano said.

Continuing to divert capital funds for operating needs will throw Metra back to the late '70s and early '80s, Pagano said. Those were the days when locomotives broke down regularly, rail car windows leaked, cars had holes in the floors and trains were late 40 percent of the time, he said.

If Pace cuts service, suburban residents who have no other option to get to school and work will suffer, Executive Director T.J. Ross said. Cuts would disproportionately affect senior citizens and people with disabilities, who depend on Pace's paratransit service, he said.

The CTA is evaluating service reductions and other steps to close its \$110 million budget gap, the agency's new president, Ron Huberman said.

In a letter to Blagojevich, the business-labor Transportation for Illinois Coalition, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and seven county chairmen warned that Illinois faced a crisis due to declining investment in infrastructure.

"Chicago's public transit system is breaking down," the letter stated. "Our highways are among the nation's most congested. Downstate roads and bridges ... are literally

crumbling. And rail bottlenecks and interstate highway congestion in greater Chicago are adversely affecting the region's commerce."

rwrnski@tribune.com
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• RTA RATTLES

Business sends SOS to state about RTA

More mass transit funds urged, tax on gas suggested

By Richard Wronski
Tribune staff reporter
Published May 8, 2007

If the Illinois General Assembly does not act immediately to reform and refinance the region's mass transit system, the Chicago area's economic health will be jeopardized, according to an influential group of business leaders.

The state must give the Regional Transportation Authority the power to raise additional revenue, including increasing the sales tax and levying a gasoline tax of up to 5 percent per gallon, the business-backed civic group Chicago Metropolis 2020 said.

"This is a group of business people standing up and saying, 'We're willing to push for additional taxes, including a gas tax.' This is very significant," said George Ranney Jr., Chicago Metropolis' president and CEO.

Legislators should also restructure the boards of the RTA, the Chicago Transit Authority, Metra and Pace to better reflect city and suburban representation, the group said. Specifically, each of the six Chicago-area counties should have direct representation on the RTA board.

Chicago Metropolis outlined the recommendations in a letter and position paper it is sending Tuesday to Gov. Rod Blagojevich and the General Assembly.

Although the need for such actions is compelling and clear, the group said, Blagojevich and the legislative leaders have failed so far to make mass transit a priority.

"Action is needed this legislative session to prevent further damage to the region's economy and global competitiveness," the group's executive council said in the letter and position paper, which were obtained by the Tribune.

A coalition of community groups on Monday had harsher words, criticizing Blagojevich for failing to address the looming transportation crisis.

Members of the Concerned Commuters of Northeastern

Illinois coalition -- including the Center for Neighborhood Technology, Illinois Public Interest Research Group, Metro Seniors in Action and the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization -- demanded that Blagojevich take a leadership role in obtaining new transit funding.

Chicago Metropolis recommends giving the RTA the authority, responsibility and accountability necessary to create and run a truly regional system; providing adequate long-term revenue sources; and making the governing structure of the RTA and three service boards more regional and accountable.

The RTA's current structure hasn't been modified since 1983.

Many of the changes are contained in legislation that has been introduced by Rep. Julie Hamos (D-Evanston).

The RTA is asking the state to fill a current shortfall of \$226 million and to provide \$400 million annually for operations. In addition, \$10 billion is needed over the next five years for capital improvements.

Unless the legislature acts by July 1, the RTA said, the CTA, Metra and Pace will begin considering fare hikes and service cuts.

Chicago Metropolis' plan proposes seven funding options, including an RTA-imposed gas tax of up to 5 percent.

The plan also proposes an increase the RTA sales tax to 1.25 percent from 1 percent in the CTA service area, and an increase in each of the collar counties from the current quarter percent to at least one-half percent.

But with gasoline prices well over \$3 a gallon, Chicago Metropolis' gas tax proposal "could not have come at a worse time," said David Schulz, director of the Infrastructure Technology Institute at Northwestern University.

Spokesmen for Blagojevich did not return calls for comment Monday.

The governor's office previously has said that the legislature must first deal with Blagojevich's plan to fund health care and education with his controversial \$7 billion gross-receipts tax on businesses.
Transit suggestions

Changes to RTA and transit agency boards being proposed by Chicago Metropolis 2020:
RTA board -- Expanding the 13-member board:

*Authorize each of the six area County Board chairmen to make one appointment. Currently, the Cook County president makes none, the DuPage chairman has one, and the chairmen of the four other counties share two

appointments.

*Authorize the mayor of Chicago to make two additional appointments, change the CTA chairman to non-voting member.

*Add the Metra and Pace chairmen as non-voting members.

*Add one appointment by the governor.

CTA board -- Maintain current 7 voting members board:

*Add one voting member appointed by RTA board.

*Require that governor's appointees reside in the suburban area served by CTA.

*Add representatives from Pace and Metra as non-voting members.

Metra board -- Add 2 voting members to the 7-member board:

*Add one member appointed by RTA Board.

*Increase the mayor of Chicago's appointments to two from one.

*Add Pace and CTA representatives as non-voting members.

Pace board -- Add one voting member to the 12-member board:

*Add one member appointed by the RTA board.

*Add Metra and CTA representatives as non-voting members.

*Eliminate the requirement that Pace board members be mayors or former mayors.

rwronski@tribune.com
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The Spring 2007 convention of the Motor Bus Society, Inc. was held April 27-29, 2007, in eastern North Carolina.

Here is a trip report and photos of the different transit properties we visited over the three days.

On Friday, April 27th our group of 48 travelers departed our hotel convention at 0800 on a coach supplied by Sho-Tranz Executive Tours.



Our first stop was at North Carolina State University (WolfLine). This operation serves the campus of NC State and has a fleet of at least 30 vehicles, 5 being 32' and 18 being 40' Blue Bird deluxe shuttles. They also have one 30' and one 35' Flixible Metro and 5 New Flyers.



Above is a photo of WolfLine 4111, a 1999 Blue Bird deluxe shuttle, while the photo in the top right column is of 3901, a New Flyer.



Our next stop after departing NC State was Triangle Transit Authority in Morrisville, NC.

This regional system connects Raleigh with the cities of Chapel Hill, Durham, Hillsborough, Garner and Cary.

Their bus fleet uses three orders of Thomas buses delivered in 1988, 2000 and 2001, along with a number of 2001 Eldorado type vehicles.

The photo below of 2015 was taken in Raleigh at our first stop at NC State.



In this below photo we see one of their Eldorado vehicles.



Our next stop was at the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation bus hub. Their entire fleet consists of new Orion VII's.

Here we see 5602 waiting for departure.



After this stop our group headed for Greensboro, and stopped for photos at the Intermodal station. This is the old Southern Railway train station and serves Greensboro TA, Greyhound and Trailways.

Here is a view of the rehabilitated Southern Railway Intermodal station. The bus terminal is up where the tracks are.



Greensboro operates a number of different vehicle types. We observed Gillig, New Flyer, Orion and Thomas buses.

Here is bus 799, a 1991 Gillig.



Bus 756, a 2004 Orion



As page top right is bus 784, a 2000 Thomas



Bus 851



After leaving Greensboro, the group headed to High Point with a stop for lunch at the Oak Hollow Mall.

The transit terminal is located along side the High Point railroad station and blends in nicely with the train station.



Here is a view of the train station.



High Point operates a fleet of 2004 DaimlerChrysler SLF's.

Here is one departing the transit center with an overall wrap for the High Point Fire Department.



Our next and final stop of the day was at Winston-Salem.

We first stopped at the Clark Campbell Transportation Center in Winston-Salem and then continued onto the garage. Here we see WSTA 1609 departing the transportation center.



Saturday, April 28 saw us depart the convention hotel at 0800 for the start of a 2:45 trip to Charlotte.

Our first stop was for lunch and then onto the Charlotte Area Transit System. We were given a tour of the Bus Operations Division and the Light Rail Facility which is adjacent to the bus division.

Charlotte operates Gillig high and low-floor buses, MCI commuter coaches, Nova low-floors and 2 Gillig Hybrid low-floor buses.

The photo of the Gillig Hybrid low-floor on the top right of the page was taken at the Bus Operations Division, along with the photo of the MCI commuter coach.



As stated earlier, the Light Rail Facility is adjacent to the Bus Operations Division. The tour members were transported to the light rail facility by bus because the gate between the two facilities was locked for the weekend.

We were given a tour of the control center and shop area along with being shown one of the light rail cars that just returned from testing.



The photo above was taken from a second floor window next to the control center, while the photo on the next page is of car 104 in the light rail shops.



Upon completion of the shop tour the attendees went outside and looked over one of the light rail cars posed outside.



Departing the Light Rail Facility, the tour traveled to the downtown Transportation Center to photograph the equipment operating this day.

Nova Low-floor 880 loading at the transit center.



Gillig suburban 542 is show in the above right column.



Gillig low-floor 945.



After spending time at the Charlotte Transportation Center our group headed to see the Concord-Kannapolis Area Transit (C-K RIDER). This operation consists of 8 2004 Gillig 35 foot low-floor buses.



This was our final stop of the day and we headed back to Raleigh and our hotel.

Sunday, April 29 was the final day of the convention, and again saw the group depart at 0800 to view transit properties in Raleigh, Duke University, Durham Area Transit, Chapel Hill Transit and Carolina Trailways.

Our first stop of the day was at the Capital Area Transit Garage (Raleigh). CAT has a very tight yard and the equipment is jammed into any space available.

This paint scheme goes back over 20 years. I have photos of GMC fishbowls in this scheme. Their current fleet consists of TMC RTS's, Nova RTS's, Orion V and Thomas buses.

Here are a few shots of some of the equipment we observed.

CAT 110 2002 Thomas



CAT 1231 1996 Nova/TMC RTS.



CAT 1256 2003 Orion V



Our next stop was the Carolina Trailways garage.

On the right are a few shots of equipment that was observed in the yard.

Carolina Trailways 85795 2002 G4500



Carolina Trailways 85620 1997 102D3



Carolina Trailways 85638 1999 102DL3



Departing the Carolina Trailways garage, we headed to the CAT Moore Square Station for photos.

After photographing two lineups our intrepid band headed to Duke University and their campus system. Duke operates mostly Orions with some Bluebird and Thomas buses thrown into the mix.

Here are a few shots of the equipment observed at their garage.



The bus shown above is DU-665, a 1994 Orion.

The picture below is of DU-900, a 2001 Orion.



Above is DU-904, a 2002 Thomas while below is DU-1009, a 2003 Bluebird.



After leaving Duke University we headed to lunch and then onto the Durham Area Transit Authority Maintenance Facility.

Durham Area Transit Authority is known as DATA.

Durham has a fleet of 49 vehicles of which 7 are 1992 Orions, 11 30' Gillig Phantoms and 31 are Gillig low-floors.

Below are a few of the buses observed at the maintenance facility. Below is Durham 0004.



Durham 0008



Durham 0325



Durham 9203



Our final stop of the day, and the convention, was at Chapel Hill Transit.

The Chapel Hill fleet currently consists of Gillig and RTS buses along with 3 Flxible'.

Chapel Hill Transit 750 1995 Gillig



Chapel Hill Transit 809 2002 Nova RTS



Chapel Hill Transit 1712 1978 Flxible



Chapel Hill Transit 7410 1990 TMC



Chapel Hill Transit is ex-410. A number of buses were rehabilitated and after the process was completed they received a 7 before the original number.

The last photo is the mandatory group photo of the MBS members who attended the convention in North Carolina.



The Fall 2007 convention will be in the Cincinnati/Dayton/Columbus area and will be based in Dayton.