

Green Pennant Special

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

DECEMBER 2007

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.

• DECEMBER MEETING

The December meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on December 7, 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 "*Motor Busses of the Badger State*," will be a slide presentation by Ed Montejano.

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.

ELECTION NOTICE

Enclosed with this issue of The Green Pennant Special, all 2007 members in good standing will find a ballot for this years election of Directors of the Omnibus Society of America.

Vote for only one Director, either the candidate named on the ballot, or a write-in candidate of your choice.

Please mail the ballot to the address shown, or bring

it to the December meeting. All ballots must be received by the beginning of the December meeting to be counted. There will be no other ballots given out to members who "forget" their ballots.

DUES INFORMATION.

Membership dues for 2008 will begin to be accepted January 1, 2008.

Because of the increase in postage and printing costs, the OSA Board has voted to raise the yearly dues to \$30 a year from \$25.

The Board has also voted to offer a three-year membership for 2008. Dues for the three-year period (2008-2010) will be \$80.00.

CHBM Macomb/Galesburg Fan Trip

The Chicagoland Historical Bus Museum operated a trip to Macomb/Galesburg on November 3rd to ride and photograph buses in both cities. Shown below are a few photos of what was observed.



PATCO prepares new card system

Sunday, October 21, 2007

By Jonathan Vit

jvit@snewsco.com

The Freedom Card, an ambitious swipe-and-go reloadable fare system that will soon replace the Port Authority Transit Corporation's clunky magnetic cards, is closer to becoming a reality.

"We are progressing along," said John Matheussen, Chief Executive Officer for PATCO's parent company, the Delaware River Port Authority. "We are getting better results through we are not quite to the point where we are ready to turn the system over to the public."

The new fare system was slated to hit the streets in summer of 2007, but delays have kept the freedom card from being fully implemented in time. Currently, Freedom Card terminals, which resemble those used by New York's Metro Transit Authority subway system, are operating at select terminals, but only offer flimsy paper cards as tickets.

At other stops, PATCO's antiquated magnetic system, which requires users to plug in a handful of change for a one or two ride plastic ticket are still the standard.

Yet, turnstiles for both systems have been installed at stations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, a move that requires passengers head to the proper system-specific exit to leave the terminal.

According to Matheussen, Cubic Transportation Services, the system's developer, has made strides toward implementing the new fare service, despite the previous delays to the project.

"The work that has been done in the last month is encouraging," said Matheussen.

Despite the optimism, Matheussen was unable to say when the system would become a reality, reiterating only that "there have been some improvement and these improvements are encouraging."

Cubic has also been awarded a contract for a \$200,000-a-year service center that will be housed in the Walter Rand Transportation Center in Camden.

DRPA officials are dreaming of the day when, once implemented, the Freedom Card becomes cross-compatible with fare systems for all public transportation options between New York and

Philadelphia, including SEPTA, NJ Transit and MTA's New York subway and bus routes.

CATS Focused on Light Rail's Timing

Steve Harrison,
The Charlotte Observer

CATS recently began testing its light-rail trains on the full length of the 9.6-mile line and has a record time: 21 minutes from start to finish, including stops.

CATS chief executive Ron Tober is pleased with the run, though he cautioned that the actual commuting time will be between 25 and 26 minutes.

Tober and others inside CATS are increasingly optimistic they'll open during the weekend of Nov. 24-26. There will be free service Saturday and Sunday -- when the Bobcats and Panthers both have home games -- with revenue service starting Monday morning.

Now that CATS is running light rail on the length of the line, the system is taking shape. Here are a few more details about the line:

--Trains will stop at stations for 20 seconds, though drivers will have leeway to leave sooner if no one's getting on or off. That's a good thing because around the 10-second mark, lots of people will be getting antsy.

"It sounds short, but it's not," said David McDonald, a planner with CATS.

--Rush hour trains will arrive every 7.5 minutes. CATS said it has the ability to run trains every 5 minutes if there is enough demand, and it probably can increase frequency for special events, such as sporting events.

But on a consistent basis, it will be difficult to run trains any closer than 5 minutes apart. One reason: It would tie up traffic near uptown, where the train line makes several grade crossings.

--CATS plans to alternate two-car and one-car trains at rush hour and will run one-car trains during off-peak times. Each car has 68 seats and room for 230 passengers.

One limitation to the LYNX Blue Line is that CATS can't expand its trains by adding a third car because its platforms aren't long enough. They were shrunk to save money when the line was designed.

CATS could spend more money later to lengthen the platforms. Denver's transit agency is doing that to handle more riders.

Self-service kiosks have been installed at most of the line's stations, and CATS hopes that a mechanical glitch has been fixed. The manufacturer believed it was due to excessive heat.

The machines only take cash, and CATS is hoping additional machines that accept debit and credit cards will be ready by the opening.

"If we don't have enough time to test them, we may hold off until early 2008 to make sure they are good to go for the customer," said CATS spokeswoman Jean Leier. "We want them to work smoothly."

TIDBITS

CATS getting update on 2 projects

CATS is holding a public hearing Wednesday evening to hear updates on plans for rapid transit along Independence Boulevard and a streetcar project through central Charlotte. Both projects aren't happening anytime soon. The rapid transit on Independence Boulevard -- either light rail or a busway -- is slated for first opening in 2022. The first leg of the streetcar is penciled in for 2018, though there is a growing push from some in the African American community to open sooner.

The meeting will be from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the activity room of Eastland Mall, 5471 Central Ave. in Charlotte. Enter the mall through Entrance E by the former Belk store.

Yep, red really does mean stop

One reader wrote about the entrance ramp to Interstate 485 west from Pineville-Matthews Road, which was recently widened to two lanes. That widening came with a new traffic light, though the old yield sign is still standing.

Her complaint: Drivers are ignoring the red light. And when she stops at the red light before making a right on red, impatient drivers are honking.

Her question: Shouldn't the yield sign be taken down?

Scott Cole, a traffic engineer with the N.C. DOT, said that some ramps at other interchanges have both yield signs and traffic signals. But he said the state will look at this interchange to see if the yield sign should come down.

The interchange appears to bug south Charlotteans. Cole said the state received an e-mail Friday from a motorist upset that people are stopping at the red light.

Hearing set for project in Monroe

The N.C. DOT will hold a public hearing Nov. 15 about the widening of Charles Street in Monroe.

The state is proposing widening the road from Sunset Drive to Franklin Street to three lanes, with sidewalks on both sides of the project.

The meeting will be at the National Guard Armory-Assembly Hall, 700 Charles St. in Monroe, from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Bordeaux's transit ideas worth uncorking here

Oct 22, 2007 04:30 AM
CHRISTOPHER HUME

Adam Giambrone has seen the future of the TTC -- in France.

The Toronto Transit Commission chair recently spent a week looking at what the French have done to bring public transportation into the 21st century, and to put it simply, he was impressed, very impressed.

Bordeaux, for example, has already constructed 48 kilometers of a 60-kilometre tram system that opened in 2003.

"It's not theoretical," Giambrone says enviously. "It's actually being built."

For the beleaguered TTC chair, by contrast, it's mostly hurry up and wait. These days, the commission's bold expansion plans are on hold until the province comes through with some of the \$12 billion it has promised. So far, the TTC has yet to see a penny.

In other words, although Premier Dalton McGuinty talks endlessly about his commitment to public transit, he has yet to sit down and write a cheque. Until he does, his brave words are just that, words.

"The trams in Bordeaux are packed," Giambrone reports. "They have huge ridership. The city is also reclaiming its 18th-century squares that were turned into parking lots back in the 1950s and '60s."

"Transit's not an ideological issue in Bordeaux; they didn't say, 'The car is evil, we have to get rid of it.' They said, 'The car is causing a lot of problems so we're going to have to give people alternatives.'"

Giambone was also impressed that the Bordeaux trams run on a third rail that shuts off once the vehicle has passed. This provides safety and avoids the need for a Toronto-style clutter of overhead wires.

Here, the chair points out, transit has always been viewed as strictly "utilitarian." Overhead wires may mess up the city, but because they're cheap they're good enough for us.

More important, Giambone argues, is how the French fund public transit. Some systems are privately run, others public, but in either case, the operators have a contractual arrangement that allows them to borrow money in anticipation of future funding and growth.

Meanwhile, the TTC must essentially start from scratch every year when it goes before city council to beg for funding.

"This means getting anything new is incredibly difficult," Giambone explains. "You need government to lock in. It's hard to change things when every year you have to re-debate what you're going to do."

As he also points out, there's huge resistance to change among Torontonians; every time a proposal comes up for a pedestrian-only area, a streetcar right-of-way, or anything in between, the public screams bloody murder.

According to Giambone, the same thing happened in Bordeaux when its transit plans were announced. But, he says, the French city, with a population of nearly 700,000 including suburbs, held no less than 2,000 public meetings in advance of construction, by which time there was general acceptance of the scheme.

"The next two years will be critical for the TTC," Giambone says. "The most important aspect of public transit isn't cost but the quality of service."

As he points out, that's where Toronto's falling behind. The Queen streetcar, for instance, which once carried 60,000 to 70,000 passengers daily, can now handle only 40,000. And the vehicles themselves, 25 years old, have been surpassed by a new generation that has yet to arrive here.

Mostly though, Toronto has yet to have a debate about the role of the car in the city. Communities around the world have recognized the crucial importance of public transit, but here we still insist on the primacy of the single-occupancy vehicle. Like our neighbours to the south, whom we resemble more closely than ever, we prefer the comfort of the past to the rigours of the future.

New Flyer Industries Inc.

("New Flyer" or the "Company"), the leading manufacturer of heavy-duty transit vehicles in Canada and the United States, announced today that it has received new orders for up to 1,180 buses for a combined value of over US \$624 million. Of these new orders, 794 buses are firm orders and 386 are options. These orders are for a variety of vehicle configurations, including 35-, 40- and 60-foot buses and diesel, hybrid-electric, natural gas and fuel cell propulsion systems.

The largest of these orders is from Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority ("SEPTA"). New Flyer has been advised that SEPTA's board of directors has approved an order to New Flyer for 400 40-foot hybrid buses with options for up to an additional 80 buses. Including this recent award, SEPTA has ordered over 1100 buses from New Flyer since 2000, including clean diesel, hybrid-electric and electric trolley buses.

Additionally, New Flyer was recently awarded an order by BC Transit in Victoria, BC to build North America's first commercial fleet of hydrogen fuel cell buses. New Flyer, in conjunction with Ballard Power Systems and ISE Corporation, will manufacture and deliver 20 40-foot hydrogen fuel cell buses for delivery by the end of 2009. The new fleet will initially be based in Whistler, BC and will be an integral part of the public transportation infrastructure during the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Other bus orders recently awarded to New Flyer include:

- Community Transit in Everett, WA has ordered 15 60-foot hybrid BRT vehicles with options for an additional 34 buses
- OC Transpo in Ottawa, ON has ordered 47 clean diesel 60-foot buses with options for an additional 77 buses
- Mississauga Transit in Mississauga, ON has

ordered 35 60-foot diesel buses

- Valley Metro of Phoenix, AZ has ordered 52 40-foot compressed natural gas (CNG) buses
- Calgary Transit in Calgary, AB has ordered 50 40-foot and 15 60-foot clean diesel buses
- Winnipeg Transit in Winnipeg, MB has ordered 20 60-foot hybrid buses and 33 40-foot diesel buses
- Other new contracts and exercised options total 302 buses

The level of activity in 2007 has resulted in a significantly improved backlog position for the year. The total number of orders reported by New Flyer in 2007 is 3,886 buses with a value of over US \$1.9 billion.

New Flyer's backlog as of the end of September 2007 was 6,641 equivalent production units, which represents an increase of 25% in comparison to the 5,313 equivalent production units in backlog at the start of the year. The value of the order backlog as of the end of September 2007 of US \$2.5 billion has increased by 37% compared to the US \$1.8 billion backlog at the start of the year. The portion of firm orders included in the backlog has increased to US \$1.1 billion as of the end of September 2007 from US \$0.8 billion at the start of the year.

NOTE: All dollar amounts are stated in US currency based on an exchange rate of US \$1.00 = Cdn \$0.9848 to calculate the value of the Canadian contracts in this release.

Posted on Tue, Oct. 23, 2007

Rotem USA Corp. will have a workforce of 300 to build cars for SEPTA and other transit agencies.

By Paul Nussbaum

Inquirer Staff Writer

A South Korean firm will build railcars for SEPTA and other transit agencies in a 290,000-square-foot building in South Philadelphia, creating about 300 jobs.

Rotem USA Corp., a division of Hyundai Motors Group, had previously planned to build the cars in a former warehouse at the nearby Navy Yard. The new site is bigger and will require less refurbishing, officials said. Rotem will spend about \$10 million to improve the site, the company said.

The lease, announced yesterday by developer Rimas Properties, is for 20 years, and the plant will house Rotem's U.S. headquarters and employ about 300 workers on an 11.5-acre site on Weccacoe Avenue between Snyder and Oregon Avenues.

Rotem and Sojitz Corp., a Japanese company, have formed a consortium to build 120 Silverliner V regional railcars for SEPTA for \$274 million. The first cars are to be delivered to SEPTA in December 2008, and all 120 will be completed by June 2010.



The plant also will build 121 bi-level railcars for Southern California Regional Rail Authority's Metrolink commuter rail service. The company said it was pursuing contracts with other U.S. transit agencies.

SEPTA's new cars will replace 73 railcars that were built for the transit authority in the 1960s. SEPTA's overcrowded rail fleet has about 350 cars; with the retirement of the old cars and the addition of the new ones, the agency will have about 400 by 2010.

Regional rail service, which carries about 110,000 passengers a day, has seen SEPTA's largest ridership growth in recent years, rising 17 percent since 2000. Ridership is projected to continue to grow at 3.5 percent a year.

The railcars will be assembled at the South Philadelphia plant from components brought in from around the world.

The car shells will be fabricated in South Korea, the wheels and trucks in Pennsylvania and Ohio, and the seats in China, said Patrick Nowakowski, chief operations officer for SEPTA.

The property lease was arranged by Patrick Green, executive vice president, and associate Mike

Mullen of the Philadelphia office of the commercial real estate firm CB Richard Ellis Group Inc.

"As Philadelphia residents ourselves, we felt that it was critically important to secure 300 new jobs here in the city," Sammy Benakoume, president of Rimas Properties, said in a statement.

Streetcar Desired For Use By Tampa Residents

By RICH SHOPES The Tampa Tribune

Published: Oct 23, 2007

TAMPA - As the city's electric streetcar marks its first five years in operation, transportation officials say the next year will be critical in determining the system's future.

An endowment started by the developers of Harbour Island to fund the streetcar could be depleted by 2011.

That has the nonprofit Tampa Historic Streetcar Inc., which runs the system, looking to extend the endowment's life, cut costs and find additional revenue sources. The group's main objective: reposition the service so it becomes a transportation option for more than cruise ship visitors and conventioners.

The endowment provides about \$1 million yearly, including principal and interest. Because ridership has been less than projected, the principal has been tapped faster than expected. About \$3.2 million remains from the original \$5 million.

Among its plans for the coming year, the streetcar's operating board wants to:

- Continue running only two streetcars instead of four between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday to save about \$160,000 a year. That change started Oct. 1.
- Sell naming rights to the half-dozen station stops along the route that are still available for sponsorship, generating about \$600,000.
- Extend the 2.4-mile streetcar line three blocks to Whiting Street and promote the line as an Ybor City-to-downtown transit system. The extension could boost fare revenues by more than \$80,000 yearly.

City and transit officials will be asked over the next fiscal year to extend the line using \$2 million in federal grants.

The move is meant to attract new ridership, primarily Channel District residents who would take the streetcar to work or downtown events, and partiers heading toward the Channel District and Ybor City.

The move also signals a step toward creating a mass-transit system.

The streetcar began rumbling through Tampa in October 2002. Constructed for \$56 million, the streetcar was pitched as an attraction for tourists and conventioners and an incentive for developers looking to build in the Channel District. Extending to Whiting Street would bring the streetcar to the southern edge of downtown and make the line accessible to office workers and merchants.

"We're at a definite turning point," said John Moors, administrator of the Tampa Convention Center and a member of the nonprofit corporation that runs the streetcar. "We need to turn it from convention center attraction to a mode of transportation to be utilized by the public."

If extended farther, the line could connect with bus and eventual light rail terminals before looping back to Ybor City, turning it into a downtown circulator.

So far, the streetcar has a lackluster record. When proposed, then-Mayor Dick Greco predicted the line would give 500,000 rides yearly. This past fiscal year, the streetcar's best, recorded 440,000 rides.

In addition, the endowment, the line's main funding source, is dwindling and might be depleted somewhere within the next four to 15 years, depending on other funding amounts. When the endowment is exhausted, the city will be on the hook to take over the funding.

Supporters say there's plenty of good news. Ridership this year increased by 50,000, and revenue jumped by \$300,000.

They also say economic development has blossomed along the streetcar route and

convention bookings are up - both at least partly because of the streetcar.

If anything, supporters say, the endowment's erosion underscores the need to extend the line to capture a wider audience and lessen the need to draw down the endowment's principal. About \$755,000 in principal is budgeted toward streetcar operations this fiscal year.

"The idea is to utilize all of these revenue sources to the best of their ability so when the endowment does run out, the streetcar can continue to operate," Moors said. "This is a viable business that needs time to grow."

David Mechanik, president of the board for Tampa Historic Streetcar, said the three-block push will add \$80,000 more annually to the fare box and bring total annual ridership to 520,000.

Also, revenue from a special tax assessment in the area is poised to increase by \$100,000 this year as more offices, shops and condos that don't get homestead exemptions migrate to the district.

"When it started, the focus was on visitors, and Mayor Greco was definitely focused on this more as tourist attraction and less as a means of transportation, but other people were hopeful ... and I would be one of them, that we can make this into something more than just a tourist attraction," Mechanik said.

The extension plan is awaiting the completion of a federal environmental study. After that, city and transit officials will be asked to approve a plan and hire a contractor to lay the tracks. Work could start next year, provided federal funding is approved after the environmental study.

How far will light rail stretch? Studies under way

Casey Newton

The Arizona Republic
Oct. 23, 2007 12:00 AM

With construction more than two-thirds finished on Metro light rail's 20-mile starter line, engineers are already taking the next steps on a series of extensions that would stretch rail service farther across the Valley.

In the first step toward securing federal funding, Metro launched three "corridor studies" this year to evaluate new transit options for central Mesa, Tempe and Interstate 10.

Three public meetings are being held starting today on the feasibility of commuter rail, the routes extensions should take in the East Valley and the design of a northwestern extension that would send Phoenix's light-rail line to 19th and Dunlap avenues. And even with the next extensions still in the planning stages, the Maricopa Association of Governments is beginning to look beyond 2025, the year that the currently funded extensions are all expected to be operational.



Technician Jeff Song-Collins installs a bumper on a light-rail vehicle Friday at the Metro Operations Facility. The first phase of the light-rail system is scheduled to open to riders in December 2008.

MAG advertised for a consultant this month to help update its transit plan. The yearlong study could identify new transit corridors throughout Maricopa County.

Transit on the freeway

The extension likely to have the biggest effect on commuters would bring some form of transit running down I-10 in a 50-foot median that planners reserved when they built the freeway.

Metro is studying several technologies for the 11-mile stretch of I-10 that runs from about 79th Avenue to Central Avenue. The federal government requires cities to complete this study, called an alternatives analysis, before it will fund a major transit project.

If rail were chosen for the median, trains could

travel up to 55 mph between stations spaced two miles apart.

About 250,000 automobiles travel the corridor today. By 2030, that number is expected to reach 550,000. "We see a significant advantage, from a commuter point of view, to having a transit investment in this corridor," said Wulf Grote, director of project development for Metro.

Metro will hold meetings today and Thursday to get public input on the I-10 proposal. Among the key remaining questions are how a commuter-rail line would connect to the 20-mile starter line and to the Capitol, a major destination for transit users.

Trains, though not necessarily light rail, could be traveling down the freeway median as early as 2015.

Picking up parcels

On Oct. 30, at an open house at Orangewood Elementary School, Phoenix officials will present designs of the rail line's northwestern extension.

Engineers have designed the extension to be built in a trackway that runs in the center of 19th Avenue, allowing the existing vehicle lanes to remain intact.

That open house will give residents an early look at designs for the project.

"We haven't really met with the community at large on the northwest extension since we determined the route," said Maria Hyatt, Phoenix's light-rail coordinator. "This is to let them know what's going on."

Metro has awarded engineering and construction contracts for the extension and is beginning to acquire the necessary rights-of-way.

That means purchasing about 30 complete parcels and many more partial acquisitions, said Mark Soronson, manager of corridor planning for Metro.

The \$300 million project will bring rail to an estimated 20,000 residents, about 14 percent of whom have no automobile, according to Metro. That compares with 7 percent of car less households countywide.

Rail service to Dunlap Avenue is scheduled to

begin in 2012.

A second phase, which would bring rail to 25th Avenue and Mountain View Road, could be completed by 2017.

But that phase, which would cross Interstate 17 to extend service through the Metrocenter mall area, has been put on hold until ADOT resolves how it will increase capacity on I-17.

A rail couplet for Mesa?

Of the three federal studies that they began this year, engineers are furthest along in evaluating transit options for downtown Mesa.

Metro began its two-year study of Mesa's transit corridor in February and is now conducting an initial review of possible light-rail and rapid-transit bus routes. Metro officials invited the public this month to offer their thoughts on how to extend rail from Main Street and Sycamore east to the Mesa Towne Center at Horne.

The same study is considering enhancements to rapid-transit bus service that would connect the light-rail starter line with Superstition Springs Center.

If light rail is chosen for the corridor, Mesa residents and merchants will have to decide whether to bring the tracks down Main Street or divert rail around the city's core using a couplet system. More public meetings are planned in coming months, with a decision on which mode of transit to use expected next summer.

Getting started in Tempe

In August, engineers began working on a two-year analysis on a stretch of Rural Road that runs south from the light-rail starter line to Southern Avenue.

The area is densely packed with Arizona State University students, and improving transit access is a high priority for Metro. Still, whether light rail will extend to Rural Road remains uncertain.

The project's relatively short length, 2 miles, could make it difficult to secure federal funding. The narrow streets would make construction difficult and particularly disruptive to neighbors, engineers said.

Consultants could ultimately recommend rapid-transit bus or another technology for Rural. "When we're talking about light rail, it has to work for the community," said Eric Anderson, transportation director for MAG.

Valley gets first glimpse of light-rail car

Patty Lepkowski, For the Tribune

As Arizona State University football fans and community members walked outside Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, some stopped to tour a different display during Saturday's homecoming festivities.

People had the opportunity to tour a real Metro light-rail vehicle that will be running on the tracks in less than a year.

Metro has displayed mock light-rail vehicles in Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa, but Saturday marked the first time that the public could see and walk through a real vehicle, Metro spokeswoman Amy Washburn said.

The vehicle contains 66 seats with space for about 200 people, counting the standing room. Three of the vehicles can be linked together for a full capacity of 600 people, Washburn said.

"There's going to be 75,000 people here, so we're expecting them to stop through," Washburn said.

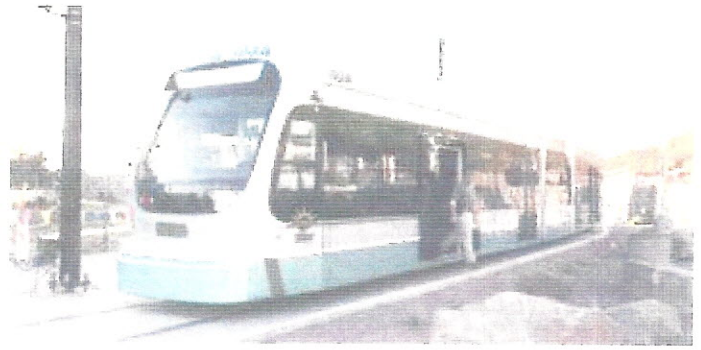
"We just want people to see the train and familiarize themselves with it. So what better day than homecoming to display it?"

ASU sophomore Sara Arbogast, 19, of Surprise toured the vehicle with a friend. She said she was impressed by the vehicle and is excited for the light rail to begin running.

"They have a thing to hang your bike inside which is cool, even though I don't ride my bike," Arbogast said. "And it's really spacious."

One Mesa restaurant manager said he has been frustrated with the light-rail construction. He said he hopes the display is a sign of progress on the long-anticipated project.

Buffet on Main Street near Dobson Road, about 20 people dined in the restaurant. Restaurant manager Wu said that is only about half of the people who used to come into the restaurant before June when light-rail construction began in the area.



A light-rail vehicle is on display near Sun Devil Stadium before the ASU football game Saturday in Tempe. Lisa Olson, Tribune

Business at the restaurant has decreased nearly 40 percent in the last four months because of traffic congestion due to light-rail construction on Main Street, Wu said. He said the restaurant reported its lowest profits ever in the 10 years that Wu and his wife have managed the restaurant.

"My business is down so much already, so it's difficult to regain that 40 percent," Wu said.

With only one lane open in either direction on Main Street, many drivers may simply be avoiding the area Wu said.

"We just hope they finish as soon as possible so we can save our business," he said. "There's just been too much damage. I'm not sure we can recover."

'Light rail light' possible for Bountiful

Melinda Williams 23.OCT.07

"I left my heart in San Francisco..."

BOUNTIFUL — Or maybe it's Bountiful. Advocates of the one-quarter cent transportation tax want South Davis residents to know they haven't been forgotten, and that streetcars are being considered as a transportation alternative.

"Our message is, 'There's something out there for you,'" said Northern Utah Transportation Alliance spokesperson Steve Handy, of the issue that will appear on the Nov. 6 ballot. "Don't write this off."

The possibility of streetcars was first mentioned publicly at a recent Bountiful Exchange Club meeting.

But Kerry S. Doane, UTA's South Davis Transit Project director doesn't like the term "streetcars" because she thinks the public will immediately think

of San Francisco's tourist street cars.



PORTLAND'S STREETCARS offer an example of what local streetcars might look like if implemented for Davis County

A public open house will be held on Nov. 7 at the Bountiful Recreation Center, to discuss the transportation alternatives.

UTA officials recently shared some preliminary results from their ongoing South Davis Transit Authority to counter a perception from elected officials and residents in south Davis County that they wouldn't directly benefit from the currently-proposed quarter cent sales tax increase on this November's ballot.

Doane, UTA's South Davis Transit Project Director, said, "There are some exciting possibilities and we're down to a short list."

Included on this list are streetcars that would run through North Salt to Farmington with connections to FrontRunner and UTA's bus system.

Handy said UTA wants South Davis residents to know that streetcars are "definitely on the table."

Streetcars, sometimes called "light rail light," would run on fixed lines. The difference between this possible solution and TRAX in Salt Lake City is that auto traffic could also run behind these street cars, which isn't the case for TRAX.

Doane and Justin Jones, UTA's manager of government relations, recently met with members of the Northern Utah Transportation Alliance including Davis Chamber of Commerce President, John Pitt.

"This is an exciting option for us in South Davis. Funds from the quarter cent sales tax increase, which is being promoted by the chamber, could directly be used to fund a streetcar option for South

Davis," said Pitt. Pitt resides in Bountiful and is a former Bountiful City Council member.

Pitt also emphasized that we must get the funding in place and then local officials, with input from their constituencies, can decide its best use.

If passed, the quarter cent sales tax would generate approximately \$12 million a year in Davis County. All of these funds would be used for transportation improvement in Davis County including transit options in the south part of the county.

Bountiful Mayor Joe Johnston, a strong advocate of a TRAX-like system in South Davis, recently educated the executive committee of the Northern Utah Transportation Alliance about the Street Car option.

"We've got a real reason to now to vote in favor of the quarter cent sales tax increase," said Johnston. We've got to get the word out.

Jones emphasized that "we're down to a short list and a streetcar option is definitely on the table."

The South Davis Transit Study, with the stated purpose of identifying the best transit solution and/or solutions for South Davis, began in early 2007. The alternative analysis will conclude with the identification of a locally preferred alternative in late 2007.

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Streetcar inches closer to GR

Thursday, October 25, 2007

By Ken Kolker
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The streetcars some desire for downtown are inching toward the tracks after The Rapid transit board unanimously approved spending nearly \$360,000 in federal and state funds for a consultant's study.

The board is asking DMJM Harris, a transportation consultant, to determine whether streetcars would work in Grand Rapids and help spur development.

The streetcar idea has caught the imagination of some local leaders.

"There's a sparkle, but, at the same time, there's cautious optimism," said Rapid Director of Development Jim Fetzer. "We want to get the facts

to make sure it's something the community should explore and invest in."

A preliminary plan shows streetcars resembling bullet trains on a 2.4-mile track through downtown, sharing the roads with cars. They would connect Van Andel Arena, DeVos Place convention center, museums, bars, hotels and other attractions.

The route would head north and south on Monroe, Ottawa and Ionia avenues NW. It would stretch from the Sixth Street Bridge south, nearly to Wealthy Street SW.

The preliminary price tag: At least \$69 million. Transit leaders say streetcars would be at least five years away.

A group of well-connected local business leaders and politicians is behind the push for streetcars, including Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell, former Mayor John Logie and Wyoming Mayor Carol Sheets.

In November, they were among local leaders who flew to Portland, Ore., to study that city's streetcars. The intent is to duplicate Portland's system, which was paid for with mostly private funding and parking revenues.

Transit officials hope streetcars would become a key part of mass transit.

The streetcar route would connect to a proposed express bus line, with new buses, serving communities south of downtown Grand Rapids as far as 60th Street on a bus-only lane on South Division Avenue.

The streetcar study would take eight months and answer these questions, among others:

- Would anybody ride it?
- Would it generate development downtown?
- Who might pay for it?
- What kinds of fares should be charged?

—Press reporter Kyla King contributed to this story.

Two Capital MetroRail Trains Arrive in Austin

Mass Transit magazine

Capital Metro is excited to announce the arrival of the first two Capital MetroRail trains from Switzerland.

The first train arrived on Monday, October 22 and the second train arrived Tuesday, October 23 at Capital Metro's Rail Maintenance Facility. The trains were manufactured by Stadler Rail Group and shipped from Germany to the Port of Galveston. Trucks transported the trains to Austin.



Capital Metro's commuter rail system will include six diesel-electric trains. The remaining trains are expected to arrive by spring 2008. Each train will have room for more than 200 passengers (108 seated) and will feature bicycle and luggage racks, high-back seats, low-floor entry for easy access, and free Wi-Fi.

"The arrival of the commuter rail vehicles marks a milestone in the MetroRail project," says Capital Metro President/CEO Fred Gilliam. "We look forward to the fall of 2008 when Capital Metro will offer central Texans a new opportunity to cut through congestion."

Capital MetroRail trains will exceed both U.S. and European safety standards. In mid-November, Capital Metro will begin testing the vehicles along the rail line from Howard Lane and Mopac down to 47th street and Airport Boulevard. Testing will occur between 7 p.m. and 5 a.m. daily, including weekends.

During initial testing, the rail car will reach speeds of 20 to 45 mph and not travel more than 20mph over railroad crossings. Capital Metro will also conduct 1,000 miles of testing for each vehicle to ensure certain specifications and reliability. This requirement is part of Capital Metro's vehicle acceptance program.

The commuter rail trains are much quieter and faster than freight trains. The lengths of the trains are also shorter than a freight train, so they will pass by more quickly.

"We are proud that our trains will be in passenger service in Texas in the near future," says Peter Spuhler, Stadler Rail Group CEO. "This is already the second project for Stadler in the USA."

Oct. 26, 2007, 11:26PM

Light rail funding still has hurdles to clear

Federal dollars are limited, but Metro officials remain optimistic

By RAD SALLEE

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Despite the optimism expressed by Metropolitan Transit Authority officials last week, the agency still has some hurdles to clear before it gains federal funding for two of its light rail lines.

Changes in federal rules for evaluating transit projects have improved the cost-effectiveness scores for Metro's planned North and Southeast lines above the minimum levels for funding, Metro President and CEO Frank Wilson announced last week.

As a result, he said, Metro no longer will need to resort to the less expensive alternative of Bus Rapid Transit and can build the light rail that voters approved and were promised.

But because the rule changes affect all applicants, the competitive position of Metro's projects might not improve. If there were not enough federal dollars for so-called New Starts projects to fund them all, some would not make the cut.

Ron Fisher, director of project planning at the Federal Transit Administration, said the annual sum for New Starts has held steady at near \$1.5 billion for several years.

"We can't say what will happen in the future," Fisher said. "The history is that once you have an acceptable rating, you are very likely to get funding."

Projects staggered

Wilson said Metro now has an acceptable rating for the lines to receive 50 percent federal funding for light rail. The estimated costs are \$478.7 million for the North line, \$530.4 million for the Southeast.

That comes to \$1 billion, and other projects, including the University line and a North Side Intermodal Terminal, may push the total to around \$2 billion.

In light of those sums, \$1.5 billion in federal money to spread over a host of projects nationally may not seem like much. But Metro consultant Kim Slaughter noted that the funding of big-ticket projects is spread over several years.

"There are many projects in the pipeline, but not all are at the same stage of readiness," she said. "Most of them may be in the very early stage where they are still doing the planning and conceptual work."

Federal funding is not an issue for the Uptown and East End lines, which Metro plans to pay for itself, backed by booming sales tax revenue. The University line always had the kind of ridership and cost projections to qualify for federal dollars, Metro says.

Among the FTA rule changes, Metro says, is a willingness to consider "rail bias" — that some people will ride rail and not buses even if cost and travel times are identical.

A second change, according to Slaughter, is that Metro may now forecast ridership in light of local transportation projects planned through 2035, vastly extending the previous planning horizon of 2011.

Updated proposals

That means that the two lines would be evaluated as parts of a coordinated system that would include five light rail lines and several planned commuter rail lines, Slaughter said.

The third change was not an FTA rule, she said.

"We were able to show the Houston-Galveston Area Council that there were zones along corridors where population and employment will be greater than what they had estimated," Slaughter said.

Slaughter said the FTA will get updated proposals Nov. 9.

Until those are examined, said FTA spokesman Wes Irvin, the agency cannot comment on how the change will affect project funding or timetable.
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Arlington candidates take aim at \$120 million trolley

Arlington - A roughly \$120 million project to build a trolley down Columbia Pike has come under election-year fire from Arlington Board candidates who say the plan is too expensive and its approval was influenced by padded budget numbers.

The board last year approved — but did not fund — the plan to add a 4.7-mile streetcar route along the Pike from Pentagon City to Skyline. The trolleys would replace most of the buses in what is now one of the most heavily used bus lines in the entire Washington area. On Monday, board members voted to make the streetcar system one of the county's top priorities for funding from regional and commonwealth sources.

The initiative is being started at a time when the county is facing a deficit and has told the school board to curtail new building.

The board chose the trolley line over a less costly Bus Rapid Transit system using very large buses and an even cheaper approach using a mix of regular and transit buses — the later recommended by Arlington's Transportation Advisory Committee.

Joe Warren, who is now a Republican candidate for the board, was a member of the transportation committee at the time. He said the pro-trolley vote came only after \$28 million in road improvements was added to the rapid-transit alternative, making its \$110 million to \$120 million cost appear similar to the streetcar plan. The estimated cost for the bus/transit-bus system was \$25 million to \$40 million.

A mistake was made in that analysis, acknowledged Steve Del Giudice, Arlington's transit bureau chief, who said the error was corrected before the board voted.

Warren, who was a transportation economist with the U.S. Government Accountability Office before retiring, was so disgusted by the trolley planning process, he said, he decided to run for office.

Proponents of improving Columbia Pike, including board member and candidate Walter Tejada and fellow Democratic candidate Mary Hynes, call the trolley essential to redevelopment. Developers are more willing to invest near permanent transit routes like rail or trolleys, Del Giudice said, adding the trolleys move more people with fewer vehicles.

The project will lead to gentrification of one of Arlington's few areas of affordable housing, countered Green candidate Josh Ruebner.

It's expensive, he said, and a "boondoggle for developers."

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TTC suspects province is plotting a takeover

Rising speculation sparks city backlash

Oct 24, 2007 04:30 AM

TESS KALINOWSKI

AND JIM BYERS

STAFF REPORTERS

It's been quietly talked about in backrooms for months. But as the city's budget travails continue, the idea of a provincial takeover of Toronto's best brand — the TTC — is being discussed openly at city hall.

Rising speculation about a provincial takeover of at least part of the Toronto Transit Commission has sparked a backlash from councillors, and TTC officials are quietly assembling a public relations campaign to defeat a move they think could destroy one of Toronto's iconic services.

TTC chair and Councillor Adam Giambrone, who is adamantly opposed, says he's received no direct overtures from the province but is aware of the speculation.

With transit high on the public agenda, "the province might have an interest in managing that file directly and being able to take credit for it," he said.

The Greater Toronto Transportation Authority already has the province's mandate to plan the entire transportation network for the Golden Horseshoe. Its report is expected in spring.

It's also poised to take over GO Transit, fuelling suggestions that it could be the vehicle the province needs to co-opt all or part of the TTC as part of a harmonized GTA transit system that would garner provincial resources, parcel out service fairly across what is now nine transit systems, and make it simpler for commuters to travel across city borders.

The authority also gets to say how Premier Dalton McGuinty's \$17.5 billion MoveOntario transit plan, which includes funds to extend the subway and build Toronto's ambitious light rail Transit City network, moves forward.

GTТА chair Rob MacIsaac has suggested everything is on the table. "I think there are opportunities for new things that haven't been thought of before, but I think 90 per cent of what we need has already been thought of and it's out there and we just need to ... assemble it," he said back in January.

A source inside the provincial government said there hasn't been any recent, serious discussion of a TTC move. But the commission is taking no chances.

In the next six months Torontonians can expect to see a public relations campaign on the TTC telling them why the city's transit deserves more funding from senior levels of government.

"The TTC does a lot of things very well and over the next six months we're going to have to start telling Torontonians a little about what is good about the TTC, about its efficiencies," said Giambrone. "We have to define what we want from a public transit system."

Toronto Deputy Mayor Joe Pantalone said he doesn't think the idea will come to fruition and that the TTC is a key part of the city.

"The City of Toronto is very protective of the TTC. It's essential to everything we believe in, from quality of life to economic development to the environment and so forth."

The GTТА, Pantalone said, is an unproven entity.

"The thought of them absorbing the TTC is asking for trouble."

But Toronto councillor and former GTТА member Brian Ashton said the issue has been discussed by transit officials.

"There are a lot of trial balloons being floated out there. I just don't know who's putting the air in them," he said, adding there are many options.

"The province might want to separate the bus from the subway system. One thing I know is that when the GTТА came along it was a natural platform that accelerates those discussions. GO eventually will be part of the GTТА. You could argue the TTC also should be part of it if the GTТА is to be truly regional."

Ashton said taking the TTC away from Toronto would "lift a large part of the city's financial burden. The province would be able to manage and control costs. But the city has a long tradition and this would be like cutting the umbilical cord."

Mayor David Miller has denounced a provincial takeover as "incredibly short-sighted." He said it would probably mean higher fares and worse service.

But Councillor Karen Stintz yesterday said it would make sense for the province to run at least part of the TTC. The city also could make money by selling Union Station to Queen's Park, she said.

Pre-election comments from former Liberal finance minister Greg Sorbara, published in July, "suggests this is something that's being thought about, whether it's being considered seriously or not," Giambrone said.

Back then, Sorbara told reporters there might be a different way to approach Toronto transit – such as combining it with GO's rail operations – but went on to say that the discussion was premature.

It doesn't help; Giambrone said yesterday, that other Toronto councillors are raising the issue in public. For him, the really frightening possibility is that the province might hand the job to a private operator – an idea that gains traction when you consider that expanding the Yonge and Spadina subway lines will take the system into York Region.

But third-party transit operations will almost certainly lead to reduced service outside downtown, Giambrone said. "All over Europe you see privatization, and what you see is lower levels of service to other parts of the city."

Giambrone said the GTТА is on record as saying it doesn't want to be an operator. But he is among those GTТА board members surveyed recently on a catchier name for the regional transit authority –

and logo ideas, including where that logo might appear on regional transit.

Although it's possible the GTTA's name could replace that of the province of Ontario inside TTC vehicles, it won't go on the outside, Giambrone insists.

Six principles to guide a light-rail route

By MICHAEL MANSUR and JEFFREY SPIVAK

The Kansas City Star

Consider a night on the town — dinner on the Country Club Plaza followed by a Sprint Center concert. You drive and park, drive and park, then fork over a hefty parking fee.

Or what about commuting from the Northland into downtown? Crossing the Missouri River can be stop-and-go driving followed by an expensive parking tab.

But what if you could just ride state-of-the-art light rail? And what if that could happen in the next few years?

It's actually possible.

Light rail has been debated in Kansas City for decades, but it has a new sense of momentum now. Civic and political leaders are intent on finding an alternative to Clay Chastain's \$1 billion voter-approved plan.

Toward that end, *The Star* consulted with experts locally and in other cities to work out an affordable, practical and realistic light-rail solution for Kansas City: A 9.75-mile starter system of modern streetcars, running from the Northland to the Plaza with an eastward branch. All this would cost \$341 million, which would require a ¼-cent sales tax increase.

This is just one idea, but it reflects the work and desires of many civic groups, transit consultants and political leaders. Close to a dozen groups have been studying light rail starter routes or analyzing election strategies, from the Greater Kansas City chamber to the Northland chamber, from the Citizens Association political club to the ATA's citizen's light-rail task force. Only the ATA's process is the official one. But all of this is being done in something of a vacuum, each independent of the other.

The Star took a different approach. We went across the city to business executives, elected officials, political groups and various transit advocates to ask: What kind of light-rail system should Kansas City have? And how big of a system can we really afford?



The result was something of a community consensus on a set of six guiding principles for a light-rail starter route:

- Start small.** Twenty-five of the 27 metro areas larger than Kansas City have some type of rail transit. Many successful regional systems offer a compelling lesson because they started with shorter, urban routes and expanded from there.

- Cross the river.** "It's got to get across the river," said City Councilman Bill Skaggs. "The people of the Northland would feel some ownership of it." Plus, crossing the river is a first step toward getting to Kansas City International Airport.

- Serve high transit demands.** The ATA bus lines with the highest daily ridership are along the Troost and Prospect Avenue corridors, which *The Star's* eastward branch along Linwood Boulevard would connect to.

- Make it modern yet affordable.** The latest trend in light rail is the modern streetcar system. This isn't the slow-moving antique trolley. The newest modern streetcars look like a train, run on rails in city streets and speed up to 45 mph, while costing almost half as much as traditional light rail. These modern streetcar systems are being planned in more than a dozen cities, including Cincinnati and Omaha, Neb.

•**Pay for it locally.** Kansas City's prospects for federal transportation matching funds are iffy for many reasons, and the process takes half a decade. Many community leaders want to get going with something now. "We need to take things in our own hands and get it started," said downtown real estate executive Jon Copaken.

•**Seek less than a 1/2 -cent sales tax increase.** The last decade is littered with light-rail proposals, including one from City Hall that sought half-cent sales tax increases and were trounced. A recent public opinion poll found a ¼-cent tax increase for light rail had close to majority support. "That's within striking distance" of victory, said longtime political consultant Pat Gray.

These guiding principles, along with additional research and interviews, steered *The Star* toward a consensus-oriented starter route that serves several different parts of town while costing a little more than the Sprint Center.

This starter plan borrows a few concepts from other light-rail concepts previously proposed for the city. For instance, the Urban Society of Kansas City, a group promoting urban-oriented planning, first suggested modern streetcar technology. Also, Clay Chastain once suggested light rail along Linwood Boulevard.

But this proposal is different in some important aspects.

For one thing, it represents a hybrid of modern streetcar light-rail systems, combining the sleekness of the Portland, Ore., streetcar with the Tacoma, Wash., dedicated, transit-only lanes — an element the ATA's light rail consultants strongly favor.

For another, it's shorter than anything that's been on an election ballot before — all previous city and Chastain proposals exceeded 20 miles. As a result, this plan costs less than anything in the past.

The starter plan is basically a demonstration project, a way to serve some commuters, connect some attractions and show that light rail can work here so the suburbs will then become more serious about pursuing a regionwide rail system.

"There'll be more of a push if we can just get that starter line in, because that's what we've seen happen in so many other cities," said Councilman Ed Ford, a Northlander spearheading the city's

light-rail strategy as chairman of the council's transportation committee.

In Ford's mind, the 9.75-mile starter plan seems sensible in many ways. "Getting over to Prospect makes a lot more sense, ridership-wise, than going a mile or two farther north," he said.

Why light rail?

For any starter route to work, the city must overcome one overriding question: Is it worthwhile to even build light rail here?

The answer is a resounding yes, for a variety of reasons.

There's the city's competitiveness, whether in attracting jobs or conventions. "There are certain things all (major) cities have, and light rail is one of them," said Christopher Byrd, a member of the Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce's light rail task force.

There's the development potential. Developers like to build around light-rail stations because the rails are a permanent investment bringing people to a destination. In Minneapolis, housing construction along the route surpassed the 20-year projection in less than a decade.

There's the need to improve mass transit. Kansas City doesn't have much traffic congestion for its size, but some rush-hour choke points exist, particularly crossing the river. In many cities, when light rail replaced buses, transit ridership doubled.

Finally, light rail could save you money.

Consider: If an average, two-car household got rid of one vehicle, and one member instead rode light rail five times a week, that household would save an estimated \$4,000 a year. If a household wanted to keep that second vehicle and just use light rail for commuting, the estimated annual savings works out to more than \$1,800. Just a downtown commuter's parking savings could be worth \$1,000 a year.

"Oh yeah, to avoid parking downtown, that'd be great," said Carolyn Vellar, a Northland neighborhood consultant who comes downtown for meetings or events.

The fact is, the time has never been better for Kansas City to move forward on light rail. City officials feel an urgency to satisfy the public's appetite for light rail. The public is more interested in environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Plus, much of the city's business elite has done a 180-degree turn on light rail.

Why the shift? With downtown re-energized now, transit connections are more important. Plus, these executives have become more aware that forward-thinking cities are investing in light rail, and Kansas City needs to keep up.

" said Jonathan Kemper, chairman of "A lot of people say, 'It's time,' Commerce Bank in Kansas City. "It does work."

Where a starter route can find support...and what obstacles await

Support for a light-rail starter route can be found in different sectors of the community:

Civic and business leaders

Many key downtown executives endorse the main principles of a light-rail starter route. They eventually want to see a regionwide rail system, but they realize successful regional systems in other big cities typically started with a small route.

"That's the only practical way to do it," said DST Systems chief executive Tom McDonnell. "You have to do it in increments."

Urban advocates

Several urban-core advocates, who have studied light-rail alternatives, endorse such cost-cutting details as using modern streetcars, funding it locally, even crossing the river on the Heart of America Bridge instead of building a new transit-only bridge.

"I'm so tired of hearing (transit planners) need a new bridge," said Dave Scott, a telecommunications executive and board member of the Urban Society of Kansas City, which champions better urban planning. "It's part of cost escalation that makes this (light rail) difficult to ever do."

African-American leaders

Many past light-rail plans and even current alternatives offered by different groups have ignored the East Side north of Brush Creek, the section of town with the city's highest transit ridership. A proposed alignment along Linwood, however, links the East Side to job centers in the central business corridor, something that appeals to some Freedom Inc. political club leaders and even

former Kansas City Mayor Emanuel Cleaver, who torpedoed a solitary downtown-Plaza route a decade ago.

"That's the most powerful idea I've heard for everyone to support it," U.S. Rep. Cleaver said of the consensus-based starter route's eastward alignment. "The first leg needs to be from a place of high unemployment to a place of high employment opportunity."

Challenges

There's no way any light-rail starter line will satisfy everyone. But if Kansas City is going to move forward with a small, self-funded route, the city needs to overcome these challenges:

Letting a starter route balloon

A Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce task force recently recommended that a starter route reach Interstate 29 and Vivion Road. That's two miles farther than a terminus at the Water Works plant. Such a position is understandable — groups all across the city want a bigger piece of light rail. But each additional mile adds \$35 million to the cost. Experts say a starter route likely will expand later, just as light rail has done in so many other cities.

Convincing key interests Power & Light District developer Blake Cordish doesn't want light rail passing through the district on either Grand Boulevard or Main Street. In the past, the Kemper banking family at UMB objected to light-rail plans on Grand, although now it's taking a wait-and-see attitude. Powerful voices will exist for or against just about any light-rail alignment.

Mayor Mark Funkhouser's regional vision

Kansas City's mayor has indicated he's not ready to support a small starter route. Instead, he favors beginning with an entire regionwide system. Only if that effort gets bogged down would he consider a smaller starter line. But based on experiences that leaders recount in other major metro areas, Funkhouser will have an easier time getting suburban officials here interested in light rail once they see something up, running and winning rave reviews.

Issues swirl in coming weeks

The status of Kansas City's light-rail effort is a complicated jumble, but it will start getting resolved within the next month. The issues that need to be worked out:

- Longtime transit advocate Clay Chastain won voter approval in November for a 27-mile light-rail system, funded partially with an extension of a 3/8 - cent sales tax currently used for Kansas City Area Transportation Authority buses. After that election, a city transportation consultant determined the Chastain plan was underfunded and unworkable. But Chastain disagrees and wants the city to move ahead with his plan.

- Businessman Jim Nutter Sr. led a petition drive to repeal and overturn Chastain's plan. Nutter has asked that the repeal be placed on the city's February 2008 election ballot. To do that, the City Council must act before Nov. 23.

- Some city officials and light-rail supporters, though, want to avoid a repeal election because it would require residents to cast "no" votes on light rail. They would prefer the City Council simply vote to repeal Chastain's election and plan.

- In the meantime, several local groups and individuals have proposed alternative light-rail starter routes, and ATA citizens light rail-task force is expected to make its own recommendation on a starter system this week or in early November.

- It appears Kansas City residents likely will get a chance to vote on some alternative light-rail plan next year.

A city ordinance has been drafted that calls for a February election on the ATA's still-undetermined light-rail starter system. It would both extend a 3/8 - cent sales tax for the bus system as well as enact a new 3/8 -cent sales tax for light rail. However, that measure could not be on the February ballot if Nutter's repeal is part of that same election because both involve the same transportation sales tax.

If the ATA needs more time to prepare a light-rail alternative, or if council members need more time to consider the ATA's light-rail recommendation, an election on that alternative plan could be put off until next August or November.

Lowell National Park getting \$409G for canal, trolley loop

The Lowell Sun

WASHINGTON -- Lowell National Historical Park is receiving \$409,000 from the federal government to replace sections of trolley track before opening a park-wide loop using canal boats and trolleys next summer. The grant will be used to upgrade track, bridges and passenger decks along the 1.5-mile rail line.

The system, using three replica trolleys patterned after turn-of-the-century rail cars, will be connected to the park's canals with seven locks that passengers can pass through on boats likely beginning in spring.

"You'll be able to do an entire loop by trolley, canal boat and short walking," said Michael Creasey, the park's superintendent.

The park plans to test boats on both the Lower and Swamp locks this week, marking the first time the waterway between the Concord and Merrimack rivers has been opened in 100 years, he said.

"The Lowell National Historic Park gives Massachusetts residents and visitors from around the world the opportunity to step back in time and get a better sense of how difficult life could be for the thousands of mill workers who helped make Lowell an international textile hub," Sen. John Kerry said in a statement.

Sen. Edward Kennedy added, "The funds will improve access to the park by transits, and help to make the transit system more environmentally friendly."

Clang, clang -- a trolley may be in your future

Portland Streetcar - Planners

Monday, October 29, 2007

DYLAN RIVERA

The Oregonian Staff

The next big thing for your neighborhood: How about the Portland Streetcar?

Emboldened by the success of the downtown streetcar line, city leaders want to expand service into a network that would crisscross the city.

Unlike bus service, city planners say, a streetcar could generate business and political momentum for clusters of midrise housing and commercial centers that could spread the walkable feel of popular urban neighborhoods.

About 140 miles of the city's busiest streets show potential for new streetcar routes, said Patrick Sweeney, project manager for the Portland Office of Transportation. Those streets have dense enough housing, employment and shopping -- and are zoned for more.

In the next six months, the transportation office will rank potential routes based on neighborhood and business support. Technical details, such as relatively flat terrain and wide intersections for railcar turns, also will be evaluated.

The toughest nut to crack might be finding a combination of neighborhood support and property ripe for redevelopment that could help raise millions of dollars in private money for each extension.

At three open houses starting today, residents will have a chance to plead for or against a line in their neighborhoods.

"A community that has a corridor and advocates for their own corridor is so important to us," Sweeney said. "If they don't support it, we're not going to pick a fight with a neighborhood."

Streetcars could make more neighborhoods resemble the popular retail corridor along Southeast Belmont, built originally along a streetcar line in the early 20th century. Likely routes could include Northeast Sandy Boulevard, lined now with car dealerships, vacant lots and low-slung buildings.

Streetcar routes could help determine how the city grows and absorbs its share of the 1 million new people expected to move to the metro area by 2040, said city Commissioner Sam Adams, who oversees the transportation office.

"It's a tough but important goal to try to accommodate the next 300,000 Portlanders within a quarter-mile of transit," Adams said. "In doing so, that protects the single-family neighborhoods that we have. If we do it right, it stands to strengthen our main streets and town centers."

At the earliest, a handful of the strongest potential lines might be built from 2010 to 2020, Sweeney said. Much of the money would come from a new federal program known as Small Starts, designed to help pay for streetcars.

Portland's plan might be among the most ambitious in the nation, said Gloria Ohland, a spokeswoman for Reconnecting America, a nonprofit transit group based in Oakland, Calif. "Portland is certainly leading the way in this effort, and other cities are really looking to Portland for guidance."

But many questions remain.

If a streetcar would bring denser development, does it stand a chance in a city where neighborhood associations sometimes criticize even modest proposals for multistory buildings? If a streetcar depends on financial contributions from developers, are there enough along each route who agree?

Initial indications say yes.

The City Council has given preliminary approval to a new line along Burnside and Couch streets downtown. Planners have tentatively placed a spur from East Burnside up Northeast Sandy to the Hollywood neighborhood on a regional transportation plan. That's a first step in seeking federal money.

Dozens of neighborhoods from all corners of Portland expressed desire for a streetcar line at an open house last summer, Adams said.

The Sullivan's Gulch neighborhood of Northeast Portland strongly supports an extension from the Lloyd District east along Northeast Broadway, said Peyton Snead, neighborhood association co-chairman. The streetcar could take traffic off Broadway, make pedestrian crossings safer and bring other amenities, he said.

Others are more skeptical.

Developer Joe Weston, who said his large piece of the Pearl District benefited greatly from the city's first streetcar line, questions whether eastside lines will prompt much redevelopment and business investment.

Weston, who owns about 20 blocks along Northeast Sandy, said the city should wait for the extension along Martin Luther King Boulevard and Grand Avenue to open in about four years to see whether investment follows.

But streetcars have become so popular that the city needs the plan it's about to embark on, said John Fregonese, a regional planner whose firm lost a bid to create the streetcar plan. "A plan allows you to examine these things in a logical way, and you can decide not to do it and you've only spent enough money for the plan."

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to <http://blog.oregonlive.com/pdxgreen>

The Ride Rolls Out First 15 Hybrid Electric Buses 10/24/2007

29 percent of fleet slated for replacement in the next six months; Long-term goal is to replace entire fleet

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) today began placing into service its first 15 clean, efficient hybrid electric buses with plans to add another five in March 2008 and seven more within the next 18 months.

Over the long term all of its 69 buses will be replaced with hybrid electric buses. AATA is the first public transit operator in the Midwest to state its intention to convert to all hybrid electric buses.

According to AATA board chairman David Nacht, the introduction of these environmentally-friendly buses continues AATA's tradition of leadership in adopting new technology to improve transit service for its 5.6 million annual riders and the community.

"Just the initial purchase will make the portion of AATA's fleet that is hybrid electric the largest in the Midwest," Nacht said. "AATA is proud to be leading the charge with a progressive approach to protecting our environment and further relieving pollution, traffic congestion and reducing our dependence on foreign oil."

AATA's new buses, which feature an Allison electric drive as part of the General Motors hybrid electric bus system, were assembled by the Gillig Corporation of Hayward, California. The buses feature a combination of a battery-powered electric motor to provide most of the power at slower speeds and a smaller, clean-diesel engine that takes over at higher speeds.

The buses are expected to reduce fuel consumption by an average of 30 percent and lower maintenance costs by 30 to 50 percent. The hybrid electric buses can run with less engine noise and minimize diesel exhaust odor.

The hybrid electric buses also will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, believed to contribute to global warming. The new buses will reduce particulate matter, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons by up to 90 percent and carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide by up to 50 percent.

"Replacing diesel buses with a hybrid electric fleet is another big step toward meeting our community's renewable energy goal. It solidifies our position as

a leader in efficient, environmentally friendly mass transit," said Ann Arbor Mayor John Hieftje.

"We have long been committed to environmental stewardship, but this is by far our most aggressive move toward ensuring a cleaner environment," said AATA Interim Executive Director Dawn Gabay. "Now, by converting 20 buses with hybrid electric technology, we will substantially add to that impact, saving 811,200 gallons of fuel and close to \$2.5 million in fuel costs over the next 12 years."

In other efforts to protect the environment, AATA converted its fleet to ultra low sulfur diesel fuel in 2002 and to a blend of five percent biodiesel and ultra low sulfur diesel in 2006. AATA is currently testing a blend of 10 percent biodiesel with ultra low sulfur diesel fuel. AATA also has an aggressive recycling program in its maintenance shop that collects and recycles nearly all lubricants, ink cartridges, cardboard, paper and other recyclable materials.

To further raise awareness of the need for environmental stewardship, AATA has also unveiled a special ecology writing contest in partnership with the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Third through eighth graders will be challenged to demonstrate their understanding of what it means to be an environmental steward in their community.

"AATA's commitment to protecting the environment of Washtenaw County is deepening as new technologies become available to us," Gabay said. "As our awareness grows, we want to give children in the area an incentive to really spend some time thinking about the ways the community can play a bigger role in minimizing the negative impacts on our environment."

AATA was chartered in 1969 by the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, as a special-purpose unit of government. The AATA provides local public transit for the cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, and nearby Pittsfield, Ypsilanti and Superior townships. AATA also provides other transportation services for the general public, people with disabilities, senior citizens and commuters, including the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University campuses. AATA is supported through local, state and federal funding, purchase of service agreements with local municipalities and fare revenues.

AATA collaborates on new Metro Airport service

ANN ARBOR, MI – Low-cost connections to Detroit Metropolitan Airport, Jackson and East Lansing will soon be available to local residents and visitors through the collaboration of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) and key local leaders with Michigan Flyer.

Michigan Flyer has announced that it will add an Ann Arbor stop to its Direct to Detroit Metro bus service beginning October 1, 2007. The bus will board passengers at the Four Points Sheraton, located at 3200 Boardwalk, with 11 daily round trips to and from Metro Airport and seven round trips to Jackson and East Lansing.

According to AATA Board Chair David Nacht, AATA has played a key role in making this service a reality.

"Michigan Flyer approached us to help them evaluate and determine possible boarding and overnight parking sites, and to connect with other important contacts in the community," Nacht said.

"We are really excited about this opportunity for residents of our community and visitors to have a low-cost option to get to Detroit Metro Airport and the ability to travel from Ann Arbor to Jackson and Lansing."

AATA has worked with Michigan Flyer in setting up an interim connection between AATA's Route 36 – Wolverine Tower Shuttle and the Michigan Flyer service, and will continue to work toward establishing connections with additional AATA routes.

The direct to Detroit Metro service will be non-stop to and from the airport and will serve both the McNamara and Smith terminals.

The introductory rate from Ann Arbor to the airport will be \$10 per person, and \$15 per person to or from East Lansing, with a "Buy Two, Get One Free" promotion in effect through December.

Details on the service are available at www.MichiganFlyer.com or by calling 888.MI.FLYER.

MTA's New Hybrid Vehicles

Developing new engine technologies as an alternative to the current diesel powered equipment is an important goal for the Mass Transportation Authority (MTA). The move toward the



development and implementation of cleaner fuels, diesel-electric hybrids, and fuel cell technology is receiving increased interest throughout the transit industry. The Mass Transportation Authority has a goal to develop public/private partnerships that will advance these technologies and reduce emissions and dependence on fossil fuels in the coming years.



In a combined effort with Kettering University, the MTA has purchased five (5) diesel-electric hybrid cutaway buses for service throughout Genesee County. These vehicles, purchased through Hoekstra Transportation in Grand Rapids, MI, were designed around the Ford E-450 chassis, and converted to hybrid-drive by I.S.E. Corporation in Poway, CA. It is anticipated that the use of these vehicles will result in a significant reduction in harmful emissions and fuel consumption. The MTA expects to achieve fuel efficiency improvements in the range of 15% to 25%. The vehicles performance will be evaluated under daily operating conditions by Kettering University engineering faculty and students.

The Mass Transportation Authority has entered into a partnership with Kettering University and Michigan State University (MSU) for the development of an advanced hybrid technology. Current hybrid equipment provides for approximately 15% to 25% improvement in the conservation of fossil fuels in the heavy-duty transit application. The advanced hybrid technology is being developed to incorporate an enhanced set of control systems and more efficient components to provide an additional improvement of 15% to 20%. This equates to an overall improvement of up to 40% over standard diesel-powered vehicles. MSU will be the lead agency in the development of the advanced hybrid technology. The commercialization effort will be headed up by Kettering University. The Mass Transportation Authority will provide the vehicles and facilities for carrying out the technology testing. The production of vehicles in the private sector with the advanced hybrid technology is being done by the firm of Transportation Techniques, LLC (Trans Teq).



Discussions are being conducted at the present time between Kettering University and Trans Teq for the production of this technology in the State of Michigan. It is anticipated that the first production vehicles utilizing advanced hybrid technology will be available in FY 2009. The utilization of advanced hybrid technology along with alternative fuels, such as bio-diesel or ethanol could reduce the need for fossil fuels by as much as 50% to 60%.

The next step in our advanced technology program is the introduction of fuel cell powered vehicles for transit use. The cooperative between the MTA and Kettering University, for the implementation of the MTA Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicle Program is

important to the future development and commercialization of heavy-duty fuel cell technology in Genesee County. Kettering University has embarked upon a program to become a national leader in the development and commercialization of fuel cell technology. The Mass Transportation Authority, as a partner in the advancement of this technology for use in the transit industry, plans to assist in the design and development of a hydrogen generation (and fueling) facility, which is necessary for the introduction of a fuel cell bus.

Initially, the facility for hydrogen development will generate adequate hydrogen to fuel 3-5 vehicles on a daily basis. It is anticipated that the construction of the hydrogen generation and fueling station will be completed during FY 2008. The construction of this type of facility, with sufficient capacity to support several transit vehicles, is consistent with the Federal Transit Administration's priority for the introduction of clean fuel alternatives. This will be the first transit hydrogen generation facility of this capacity in the State of Michigan. Together, with Kettering University and Michigan State University, the Mass Transportation Authority is looking toward the future of transportation for Michigan and Genesee County residents.

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 25, 2007

DESIGN FOR NORTHSTAR LOCOMOTIVE UNVEILED

Metro Transit calls design 'distinctive'

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL – (Oct. 25) – Metro Transit last night unveiled the graphic design to be used on locomotives for Minnesota's first commuter train, the Northstar commuter rail line.

The locomotive design was revealed at a meeting of the Metropolitan Council. It features interlocking arcs of color (red, yellow and white) on a blue background, leading to a bold yellow star.

"The design gives the train a distinctive look that will be easily recognizable as it travels along Highway 10, and is viewed by thousands stuck in traffic as the trains speed past," said Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb. "The use of color is reminiscent of Hiawatha light-rail trains while keeping the 'north star' icon that has been associated with the project during its 10 years of development.

Northstar Line locomotive



The 40-mile Northstar Line will travel between Big Lake and downtown Minneapolis. Service will consist of five weekday round trips, along with a weekday reverse-commute trip and weekend service. Trains will make the quick trip at speeds of up to 80 mph, with a direct connection to Hiawatha light-rail trains in downtown. Total project cost is estimated at \$320 million. The unveiling follows other recent milestones for the project:

- Congress last week began a final 60-day review of the application for \$156.8 million in federal funds. Earlier the application was approved by both the Office of Management and Budget and the U.S. Department of Transportation. That puts the project on track for securing final approval in December.
- The manufacturer of the train's passenger cars will be determined in early December and a contract awarded once the federal funding agreement is executed. The first order calls for 17 cars, which are expected to be delivered in 2009. The graphics for passenger cars will subtly mirror the locomotive design.
- Four remanufactured MP-36 (Motive Power, Inc.) locomotives have been purchased and are scheduled to be delivered to the Twin Cities in fall 2008.

The Northstar project is a cooperative effort between the Northstar Corridor Development Authority, Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, Minnesota Department of Transportation with the support of Governor Pawlenty and Minnesota's congressional delegation.

Metro Transit is a service of the Metropolitan Council. Bus and train ridership through September was 57.2 million, 4.7 percent higher than the same period last year.

Swift Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit is a concept that combines the efficiency and appeal of light rail with the flexibility and low cost of buses. The result is a fast, frequent and unique style of bus service coming to Highway 99 in Snohomish County - *Swift*!

Community Transit is committed to providing innovative, quality public transportation for Snohomish County. The Highway 99 corridor between Everett and Shoreline has the county's highest bus ridership and is lined with dense residential and commercial developments.

Swift will enhance transportation on this route by providing more convenient options for workers, shoppers and casual travelers, including:

- Frequent service - *Swift* buses will run every 10 minutes, 20 hours a day
- Fewer stops - *Swift* will stop at only about 15 locations along the route
- Faster boarding - *Swift* riders will pay their fares at stations and can board through any of three doors
- No schedules - Real-time monitors will display next bus arrival times

The *Swift* project, including 14 buses and at least 26 new stations, will cost \$25-30 million, which is significantly less expensive than rail. These costs are largely supported by state and federal grants that Community Transit has already secured and will involve no new taxes or fare increases.

Swift Stations

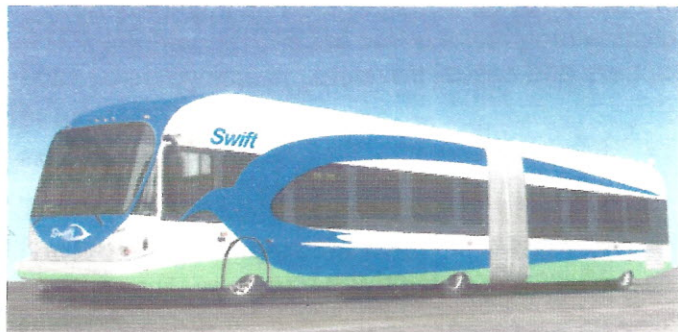


Specially designed stations will provide shelter, seating and information to help *Swift* riders get to their destinations quickly and connect to local bus service.

Swift stations will be larger than a standard bus shelter, with a roadside marker that stands out

along the corridor. The stations are designed with ample lighting and translucent weather barriers that are graffiti-resistant. Frequent visits by transit police and regular upkeep of the facility will help riders feel safe and secure during their brief waits.

Swift Vehicles



Swift vehicles are stylized 60-foot articulated buses that feature a sleek *Swift* logo and colorful paint job. The buses are designed with other features you won't find on a standard bus, including:

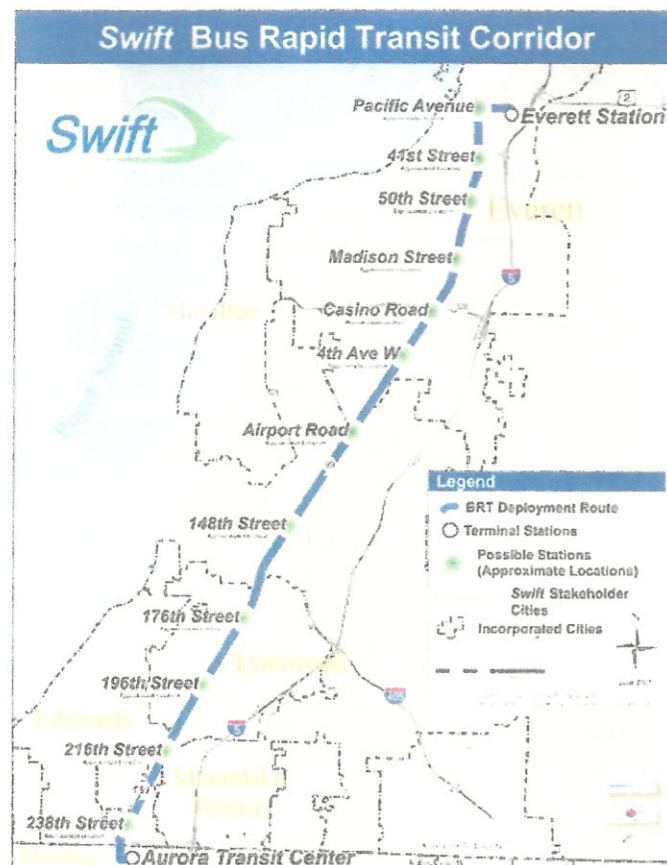
- Wide seats with extra legroom for a comfortable ride
- Standing room for riders who prefer to stand for shorter trips
- Seating for 48 passengers and overall capacity up to 80 riders
- Automatic stop announcements and an electronic monitor to announce the next stop
- Wheelchair boarding at the second door
- Bicycle boarding at the third door directly onto onboard bike racks

Swift Service

Swift will run 16.7 miles from Everett Station down Rucker Avenue, Evergreen Way and Highway 99 to the Aurora Village Transit Center in Shoreline, where connections can be made to King County Metro buses. East-west connections will be available all along the corridor, with *Swift* stations strategically located at major transit intersections.

Swift will augment the local bus service provided by both Community Transit and Everett Transit by

providing riders a fast and frequent option for traveling the corridor without transfers.



Local bus service will continue to stop at more than 50 locations along this route, including stops adjacent to *Swift* stations. End to end, local bus service takes about 73 minutes while *Swift* will take about 51 minutes, cutting roughly 30 percent of the travel time.

The *Swift* route was chosen in part because of traffic improvements already made on the corridor, including 10 miles of transit signal priority intersections, which can extend a green light to keep late-running buses on schedule, and seven miles of transit-only lanes. Plans are in the works for further improvements along the corridor.

Swift will be completed in 2009. Community Transit is already considering where future bus rapid transit lines may be constructed.

10/04/07

Agency Chooses Hybrid Buses for Swift

Snohomish County, Wash. - Community Transit's

Board of Directors today made the decision to purchase Snohomish County's first hybrid diesel-electric buses for use on the *Swift* bus rapid transit line, scheduled to begin service along the Highway 99 corridor in 2009.

The agency opted for the hybrids after an analysis showed that although they cost more to buy, the hybrid buses offer many advantages over diesel-only vehicles, including cheaper operation costs due to lower fuel costs for this high-mileage service. Hybrid buses also offer lower emissions, better reliability, smoother acceleration and are more quiet.

"This is an extremely historic action for this agency," said Board Chair Richard Marin. "While Community Transit operates a clean-diesel fleet, we have kept an eye open to the development of hybrid technology and now have data that shows it is cost effective for this application."

Today's Board action also added a bus to Community Transit's original plan to buy 14 buses for *Swift*. This summer the agency determined that, based on predicted usage and routine service requirements, an additional bus would be needed to maintain an adequate spare ratio.

Community Transit's contract with manufacturer New Flyer calls for a price of \$879,028 for each 60-foot hybrid bus, approximately \$195,000 higher than a diesel bus. The buses will be paid for with federal, state and local funding sources. U.S. Sen. Patty Murray has included a \$1.5 million earmark specifically for these buses in the Senate's 2008 transportation budget. The entire *Swift* project has an estimated budget of about \$30 million, which includes the purchase of 15 buses and construction of 29 *Swift* stations along the 16.7-mile route.

"We're looking forward to bringing bus rapid transit to Washington state and Snohomish County," said Community Transit CEO Joyce Olson Eleanor. "We have many partnerships for this project, including the City of Everett, the other jurisdictions along the route and the state and federal government who have supplied most of the funding. *Swift* will soon fly!"

Community Transit plans to begin operating its *Swift* bus rapid transit line between Everett Station and Aurora Village in 2009. The line will serve about 14 stops each way, with buses running every 10 minutes throughout the day. Transit signal priority intersections that can extend green lights a

few seconds for late-running buses, and business access-transit lanes on much of the corridor also will keep buses moving quickly. *Swift* will be coordinated with other local transit service in Everett and south Snohomish County to help passengers reach destinations between *Swift* stations as well as east-west connections.

Community Transit operates 33 local bus routes, 31 commuter routes and DART paratransit service throughout Snohomish County. It also offers carpool matching, one of the nation's largest vanpool programs and offers travel training to disabled and senior citizens. Call Community Transit at (425) 353-RIDE or (800) 562-1375 for bus information, or (888) 814-1300 for carpool or vanpool information, or go to www.communitytransit.org.

To buy, or not to buy . . . | New buses are a justified purchase

By: Jason Deuterma

Issue date: 10/30/07 Section: Opinion

Circulating the campus each day is a system of buses that students and faculty of Texas A&M University may utilize to transport them across the campus. However, each week thousands of individuals climb aboard their respective buses only to grumble about the lack of service they feel Transportation Services exhibits. Often are Director Rod Weis and his department staff inundated with student criticism regarding late buses or the inability of some to ride because of capacity. Yet, such disparagements will soon be assuaged as A&M prepares to receive 25 new buses with the approaching spring semester.

Originally, the buses to be received by A&M were to be purchased by the New Jersey Transit Authority. With the Minnesota bridge collapse, though, the government funding that was meant for New Jersey was pulled to aid in Minnesota's clean up and repair. The bus company was anxious to make a deal and A&M found itself ready to offer one.

"It was unfortunate for Minnesota, but good for us," said Rich Pontious, executive director of student services.

The cost of the 25 buses, which were purchased for about \$8 million, is assuredly a deal that could not

be passed up, especially as student opinion of Transportation Services has continued to decline in previous years because of claimed inefficiency. Yet in spite of its need to revive the now moribund image, it was only with a student mandate that such a purchase by Transportation Services was allowed to occur.

"What is most important is the process," Pontious said. "They had an opportunity and they voluntarily asked student opinion and made it a central factor in the decision making process."

It must be noted by students that this decision, while certainly in need of student opinion because of the fee increase the purchase will generate, could have been made independent of an outside input. However, Weis' willingness to maintain the integrity of student need on campus was the leading factor of the proposed purchase, and he must be applauded for allowing the students to make this decision.

In a random survey, a majority of students noted that they would be accepting of a mere \$10 increase in their student fees to afford the \$6 million to be paid off over a 10-year period. This is a very small price to pay for the purchase of buses that will include such amenities as a significant increase in seating, and the convenience of greater air flow to accommodate riders in the sweltering summer months. As well, the seemingly ancient Thomas buses still in circulation will be allowed to retire, providing more comfort for riders whose routes are forced to suffer the old vehicles.

With the net increase of new buses, many of the higher-use routes will then also have the ability to achieve increased efficiency and a decrease in the frustration of those individuals who use them.

"A few routes more likely to get a bus are 36, 34 and 15 - the initial candidates based on passenger counts," Pontious said. "They may not add a bus on a particular route all the time, but rather at high priority times. They have a really good strategy and a more directed approach."

While many will certainly gripe about the increase in fees, it can be assured that the same individuals will ride these buses as they are incorporated into the transportation system, and thus one cannot argue against a wholly legitimate and justifiable purchase.

- Jason Deuterman is a senior English major.

SCHAUMBURG, IL — November 6, 2007 —

Motor Coach Industries has been awarded a contract by Houston METRO to provide 52 diesel-electric hybrid coaches, with options for a total of 142 units to be delivered to the transit agency. MCI was the first intercity coach manufacturer to launch a public-sector commuter hybrid electric-diesel coach in 2002, and its coaches for Houston METRO will introduce hybrid technology that offers even lower emissions and greater fuel efficiency.



"This marks yet another milestone for Houston METRO and MCI," said Michael Melaniphy, MCI vice president public sector. "Houston METRO is committed to cleaning up the environment and already has hybrid transit buses in operation, but this is the first time this agency will fully utilize the technology in its long-distance commuter application. We're honored to be part of the agency's solution to a cleaner tomorrow."

"Riding public transit is an important way to reduce air pollution," said Andrew Skabowski, Sr. Director of Operations Maintenance. "By selecting hybrid technology, it not only saves in fuel and maintenance costs, it helps METRO to do even more to make Houston's air cleaner."

Five years ago, MCI delivered four D4000 (40-foot) prototype hybrid commuter coaches to New Jersey Transit. Still in operation, those coaches use MCI's first-generation hybrid components with a Cummins/ISL engine and an Allison EP 50 electric-drive hybrid propulsion system.

MCI's next-generation diesel-electric hybrids feature the company's new-look D4500 (45-foot) model and use the latest low-emission clean-diesel engine technology from Cummins along with the Allison propulsion system. The engine and an advanced electric power management system offers performance that is comparable to a large

diesel engine, but with improved fuel economy and reduced carbon emissions.

To further fuel conservation, Houston METRO's new MCI coaches will also use shore power at the depot to activate the AC unit and cool the passenger cabin prior to departure, eliminating the reliance on engine idling.

METRO's coaches will be equipped with wheelchair lifts; 55 forward-facing seats with individual overhead LED reading lights and airflow controls; and parcel racks.

MCI expects these greener coaches to be attractive to both transit agencies and private operators running sightseeing tours and long-distance commuter services. "MCI is the first OEM in North America to have over-the-road hybrid coaches in production. We've made a significant investment of capital and resources to offer a green-focused vehicle with MCI's proven reliability," said Melaniphy.

While the public is most aware of hybrid cars, Melaniphy explains that public transit hybrid buses have actually led the way. "The transit industry has been a real driver behind this movement. Hybrid buses came on the scene before most of the hybrid cars. Houston METRO is an example of an agency that has really taken the lead in being green."

Since 2001, Houston METRO has been operating a fleet of over-the-road MCI commuter coaches from its Park & Ride locations, operating in HOV lanes. METRO operates an integrated transit system that includes light rail transit, Bus Rapid Transit, Commuter Rail Transit including 25 Park & Ride lots.

With headquarters in Schaumburg, Illinois and sales and service centers across the U.S. and in Canada, MCI is the leading designer, manufacturer and marketer of coaches and is the industry's leading supplier of coach-related aftermarket parts and services for most makes and models for the North American market.

SCHAUMBURG, IL — November 1, 2007 —

Tornado likes the eye appeal of the MCI J4500 coach so much that it added 10 more this summer, bringing its fleet to 20 J4500s and 73 motor coaches overall.

The new coaches are equipped with Caterpillar C-13 engines and Allison transmissions "We're proud to have this model in our fleet," said Henry Clyde,

safety coordinator at Tornado's Houston facility. "The model is stylish, and our new graphic design and inside interiors are catching the eye of our travelers throughout the state of Texas."



Houston is Tornado's second largest terminal and original location. The company, founded in 1985 by brothers Vicente and Juan Vazquez, moved its corporate headquarters to Dallas in 1997.

Tornado serves a predominately Hispanic clientele traveling throughout most of Texas, the Midwest and Eastern United States.

"We've built a loyal customer base," said Clyde. "The J4500 offers the ride and amenities that our customers have come to expect when traveling with Tornado."

In addition to its Dallas and Houston locations, the company has grown to include operations in Atlanta, North Carolina, South Carolina, Chicago and Florida. Tornado also operates a daily scheduled service route departing from Mc Allen, Texas, to San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, Memphis and Chicago.

Tornado's website is www.tornadobus.com.

SCHAUMBURG, IL — October 17, 2007 — From wineries to college campuses, San Antonio-based Star Shuttle covers the state of Texas with its 15-year-old diversified ground transport business.

Star Shuttle recently took delivery of 10 new J4500s to replace older vehicles in its 30-coach fleet. Each coach is fitted with Caterpillar C13 engines and Allison B500 automatic transmissions, Amaya seating and SmarTire. Two of the new J4500s are also equipped with wheelchair lifts.

"Texas hill country wine tours have been growing over the past two to three years, and we've done well considering people don't want to drive if they've been tasting wine," says Star Shuttle president John Walker. "What we're doing in Texas has been going on in Napa (California) for years."



Star Shuttle is a diversified ground transport business with charter and tour operations as well as school transport. It was founded in 1992 as a subsidiary of a family owned van and car rental business called Advantage that began in 1963. The Walker Family sold Advantage in 2006.

Star Shuttle's contract business has grown steadily with expansion of mass transit on nearby college campuses and privatization of public transportation systems around its service area of Austin, Bryan/College Station, Corpus Christi, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston, Laredo, San Antonio, Temple and Waco. "We started as an airport shuttle company and shortly thereafter started doing charters with vans, and then we started to get requests from larger groups and moved into the coach industry," said Walker. "The expansion of college campuses has pushed parking farther out, and that's driven the need for better transportation within those campuses as well."

Walker said the company went with MCI because "I think they have great visual appeal — you couple that with MCI's reputation for reliability and durability and you have a great coach." The company's website is www.starshuttle.com.

NABI buses chosen for Glacier Park

North American Bus Industries (NABI) will supply Glacier National Park (GNP) with Opus 30-foot buses to help the Montana-based park accommodate its increasing number of visitors.

For the 2008 season, GNP, the Montana Department of Transportation and Flathead County public transit partners expect to improve daily shuttle service with the addition of the buses. In the off-season, the Opus buses will be used to meet other state priorities.



The park hosts more than two million visitors each year, and the shuttle service will include a fleet of Opus buses that takes riders through a 50-mile trek. Vehicle features include expansive windows and bike racks.

Park officials are working with NABI and Cummins to investigate ways to continue reducing diesel emissions

CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY

The Chicago Transit Authority has been replacing ties in the State Street Subway over the weekends. This work has necessitated the Red Line to operate over the elevated between Armitage Avenue and Cermak Road.

