



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

## FEBRUARY 2008

**\$5.00**

Welcome to another issue of The Green Pennant Special, the official publication of The Omnibus Society of America.

Through this publication we hope to keep our readers informed of events happening in the transit industry in Chicago and other cities in the United States.

Visit the Omnibus Society of America website at "[www.osabus.com](http://www.osabus.com)". At [osabus.com](http://osabus.com) we will be posting upcoming fan trips and meetings information, as well as membership information.

Please visit our site when you have a chance and give us your opinions and comments.

### • FEBRUARY MEETING

The February meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on February 1, 2008, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2751 W. Winona Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

Our program for the evening, "*Transit in Oregon & Washington State*", will be a slide presentation by Melvin Bernero.

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.

### Reassigned Contract Would Allow CTA to Save \$60,000 per Bus. More Fuel-Efficient Buses Will Save Money

12/12/07 - The Chicago Transit Board today approved reassignment of a contract option currently belonging to King County Metro, Seattle's public transit agency, for the purchase of 150 articulated hybrid buses. King Country Metro has an existing contract to purchase 60-foot hybrid buses from New Flyer Industries and today's approval to reassign the final option of the contract would allow CTA to assume the terms for a future purchase and negotiate financing.

The terms of Seattle's final option in the existing contract would allow CTA to lock in savings of \$60,000 on the purchase price of each hybrid bus. In addition, CTA estimates that the hybrid technology would save the agency more than \$900,000 annually in fuel costs and nearly \$7 million annually in maintenance, parts and labor costs over buses currently in service.



"We can't allow opportunities to reduce operating expenses and lock in reduced pricing to pass us by because of the unresolved funding issue. We have to ensure the efficient operation of this agency not only today but in the future," said CTA President Ron Huberman. "The hybrids we have been testing have been performing above our expectations, so we wanted to capitalize on the opportunity to pick up Seattle's contract option at a significant costs savings. Looking ahead, a decision on whether or not to move forward with the purchase will be made based on our funding situation."

The CTA has been testing 10 hybrid buses equipped with a parallel drive system, similar to a hybrid system found in a car. The 10 buses have recorded nearly 250,000 service miles since January and registered only one in-service failure. The 40-foot hybrid's average fuel consumption is 4.43 miles per gallon, a 77 percent improvement compared to the 1991 TMC buses they will be replacing. The 40-foot TMC buses average 2.5 miles per gallon.

Hybrid buses significantly reduce emissions compared with standard diesel buses and help CTA not only continue to meet but exceed the new emissions standard that became effective this year. Hybrid buses are quieter, cleaner and run more smoothly than conventional systems and new buses help to improve the reliability of CTA bus service for customers.



## Hillsboro to get look at railway proposal

Public meeting Thursday on reactivation of West Trenton line.

By PAMELA SROKA-HOLZMANN  
STAFF WRITER

**HILLSBOROUGH** -- Residents and commuters will have an opportunity this week to learn more about plans to reactivate passenger service on the West Trenton railroad line.

The proposed 27-mile line would link the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) West Trenton Station in Ewing to NJ Transit's Raritan Valley Line in Bridgewater, where service on the Raritan Valley Line continues to Newark Penn Station.

New stations are proposed in Ewing, Hopewell Township, Hopewell Borough, Hillsborough and Montgomery. The West Trenton Line, now owned by CSX, is part of the former Reading Railroad.

Residents and commuters are invited to a public information session on the project from 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday at the Hillsborough Municipal Complex on South Branch Road.

The Montgomery Planning Board also was expected Monday evening to pass a resolution in support of reactivating the West Trenton line.

"We're 100,000 percent for it," Montgomery Planning Board member Steven L. Sacks-Wilner said. "We've really been planning on this. It'll reduce traffic on Route 206."

Dan Stessel, a NJ Transit spokesman, said the line would provide additional transportation options in Central Jersey while promoting Smart Growth planning and land-use principles near the stations, reducing roadway congestion.

The estimated cost of the proposal is about \$219 million, and that would include the construction of rail stations, track improvements and other work to restore service, Stessel said.

Discussions about the proposal have been ongoing for about nine years, and Thursday's meeting is just the initial step in the proposal, Hillsborough Planner Bob Ringelheim said.

The West Trenton line has had no passenger service since about 1982 and offers only freight service. NJ Transit has researched potential ridership in its environmental impact statement, he said.

"Thursday's meeting is the first step in trying to get this going," Ringelheim said. "It's the first step and only the first step. There has to be an environmental assessment,

it has to be approved, there has to be negotiations -- there are a whole lot of steps involved here."

Ringelheim said the proposal is supported by the township and included in the 2005 Master Plan. According to the township's Master Plan, the proposal calls for 14 trains per day -- seven in each direction -- and the potential for added off-peak hours service.

Hillsborough Committeeman Paul Drake, also a member of the Planning Board, said the proposal could be integral to the preservation and conservation of open space in the township.

"If done well, this plan could potentially save thousands of acres of open space and farmland that otherwise would be lost to development over the next 20 years," Drake said. "A truly inspired transit-oriented design plan could look to incorporate a carbon neutral footprint so that renewable energy sources are used throughout and so that people arriving at the train station are arriving on foot or on a bicycle."

Aside from the environmental benefits, a train station that connects passengers to a system that has the potential to offer mass transit access to Manhattan from Hillsborough also has significant economic advantages, Drake noted.

"Therefore, it is important that the township respond with a positive, long-term view to this opportunity," he said. "Pending the completion of several other proposed projects, including the construction of a new rail tunnel under the Hudson, Hillsborough could see a train station in the next decade or two."

Drake said Hillsborough and the Somerset County Planning Department were able to successfully request that the state Department of Transportation modify the design of the Route 206 bypass interchange in the location of the proposed train station.

"In this way, it will coordinate in a more efficient manner with the eventual reactivation of the West Trenton Line and the proposed station on Amwell Road," Drake said. "This coordination required a forward-looking view towards how to strategically integrate the planning vision of the township, the county and the state and to find a systemwide solution to our transportation needs in Hillsborough."

The West Trenton Line reactivation is also key to plans by Hillsborough officials to create a transit village along the railroad line and Amwell Road. The transit village district concept features commercial offices, retail spaces, residential development, access for pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, buses and cabs; and parks and open space.

According to plans, the proposed Hillsborough station would be equipped with platforms and canopies, 350



parking spaces, pedestrian facilities and accessibility for the disabled.

The proposal also would renovate the Belle Mead train station on Route 206.

Ringelheim does not expect the project, if approved, to be completed until after the proposed Route 206 Bypass is constructed, a decade from now.

The railroad line in Hillsborough travels north to south parallel to existing Route 206 and near the proposed bypass and into Montgomery and veers off to the northeast into Manville, Ringelheim said.

Somerset County and township planners and officials have been working with New York-based consultant Phillips Preiss Shapiro and Associates to develop concepts for the transit village and train station.

New Jersey Transit and the state Transportation Planning Authority also have been involved in the process. Montgomery officials have kept the idea in its Master Plan for several years and have had the support of Hopewell Borough and Hopewell Township officials throughout discussions.

"Up and down the line, everyone is for this," Sacks-Wilner said.

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#### **If you go:**

New Jersey Transit has released its proposed restoration of passenger rail service on the West Trenton Line Draft Environmental Assessment for public comment.

The public will have an opportunity to attend a presentation on the draft findings from 4 to 8 p.m. Nov. 29 at the Hillsborough Municipal Complex on South Branch Road.

Comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment will be accepted at the meeting and until Jan. 15, 2008 by mail sent to Thomas Clark, Office of Government and Community Relations, NJ Transit, 1 Penn Plaza East, Newark, NJ 07105-2245 or by e-mail at [WestTrentonEA@njtransit.com](mailto:WestTrentonEA@njtransit.com).

#### **At a glance:**

The project involves restoring commuter rail service on the CSX owned West Trenton Line, a 27-mile railroad running between the existing Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) West Trenton Station in Ewing, Mercer County and NJ TRANSIT'S Raritan Valley Line (RVL) in Bridgewater. The proposed expansion would provide commuter rail service between Ewing, New Jersey and Newark Penn Station.

The \$219 million project includes: re-installation of previously removed track within the existing rail right-of-way to provide 12.8 miles of new second track; signal improvements; restoration of the at-grade crossing of the Lehigh Line at Port Reading Junction and the track connection to the Raritan Valley Line in Bridgewater, five railroad stations and related parking facilities; a train storage yard, and acquisition of additional railroad rolling stock.

The proposed stations are: West Trenton (Ewing Township), I-95 (Hopewell Township), Hopewell (Hopewell Borough), Belle Mead (Montgomery) and Hillsborough.

## **Work on Al Sufouh tram on track for January start**

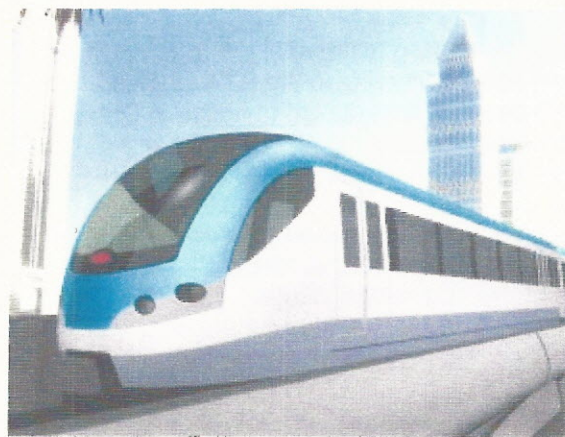
By Ashfaq Ahmed, Staff Reporter

Published: November 27, 2007, 00:11

**Dubai:** Construction on the Al Sufouh tram network will start in January to provide alternate mode of transportation in the fast growing area and to ease traffic congestion, said a senior official.

"The 15-km tram lines will run on Al Sufouh Road connecting Burj Al Arab and Jumeirah Beach Residence (JBR) and Jumeirah Lake Towers," said Engineer Abdul Majid Khaja, Chief Executive Officer of the Rail Agency at the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority (RTA).

In an exclusive interview with Gulf News, Al Khaja said the tram project would be completed within 21 months and would be operational in September 2009 with the completion of the Red Line of the Dubai Metro, which runs along Shaikh Zayed Road.



Supplied Picture  
The Dubai Metro train. Construction on the Al Sufouh tram network will start in January to provide alternate mode of transportation.

"The tram will be connected to the Red Line at three points including Burj Al Arab Station, Dubai Marina Station and Ibn Battuta Mall Station to facilitate commuters reach metro stations," he revealed.



The tram will serve areas such as Internet city, Dubai Marina, Media City, Knowledge Village, JBR and a dozens of luxury hotels in the area, which have already started facing traffic congestion.

"More than half a million people in the area are expected to benefit from the tram project, which is part of the RTA's plan to provide integrated mass transit facilities connecting trams, buses, metro and water transport projects.

The first phase of the tram project is also nicknamed 'The Shopping Trolley' as it will provide a link to major shopping areas including Mall of Emirates, Madinat Jumeirah and Ibn Battuta Mall.

"There will be a total of 270 km of tram network in Dubai in both old and new areas to feed the metro stations in addition to providing alternate modes of transport in different areas," said Al Khaja. The RTA will spend some Dh 9.19 billion on different phases of the tram project.

There will be around 19 stations planned for the tram route subject to change. Al Sufouh Tram network will also connect to the Jumeirah Palm Mono Rail project in future.

"People, who will use Dubai Metro favour a complete journey experience. Tram system and public buses are answer to their concerns as they will all be integrated to complete journey from one point to another without the need of using a private car," he noted.

There will two tracks for the tram and its average speed will be 25km per hour. Unlike Dubai Metro, trams will be driven by drivers because it mingles with vehicular traffic on the road.

The RTA is already working to improve the road network in the Al Sufouh area. According to the RTA studies, around 110,000 people are expected to reside in Dubai Marina and Jumeirah Beach Residences and some 150,000 people will live in Jumeirah Lake Towers area.

Around 100,000 people are expected to come for work in the area, which also includes Dubai Media City, the Internet City and the Knowledge Village.

#### **Future plans: Extension to Union House**

Al Sufouh Tram Project is likely to be extended on Jumeirah Road up to the Union House in future.

The Dubai Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) is, currently, studying the options of extending the tram network to other areas including Jumeirah Road.

The tram network will be linked to the nearest station of the Metro line. "The tram project will encourage people

in these posh areas to use alternate mode of transport instead of personal cars," an RTA official said.

## **RTA to add over 3,500 buses on Dubai roads**

By Ashfaq Ahmed, Staff Reporter

Published: November 25, 2007, 13:17

**Dubai:** Dubai will have more than 3,500 public buses by 2020 as part of the integrated comprehensive mass transport system, the chief of the city's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) said.

On Sunday, Mattar Al Tayer announced the purchase of 1,616 new buses to add to the city's public transport system. Deemed as the single largest bus purchase deal in the world, Al Tayer said Dubai would have 2,500 buses plying on more than 100 routes by 2009.

Dubai, currently, has around 500 buses and 1,000 new buses, already purchased, are expected to join the fleet by next year.



The RTA's purchase of 1616 buses is the largest single deal for buses ever made in the world.

Speaking at the first Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Congress of the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) in Dubai yesterday, Al Tayer said the RTA aimed at increasing the use of mass transport from the current seven per cent to 30 per cent of the population by 2020 to reduce traffic congestion, pollution and provide people with alternative modes of transportation.

He said the RTA is working on plans to provide an integrated system of mass transit modes such as buses, marine transport, metro and trams. "We will ensure such modes have low operational cost and wide geographical coverage," he said.

Currently 1.4 million people live in Dubai over an area of 4,114 square kilometers. He said the massive expansion of public transport buses would guarantee serving passengers in all areas of Dubai.



He said the RTA is currently engaged in constructing 971 air-conditioned bus stop shelters in the city and is developing marine transport systems. The RTA has already launched the water bus service in Dubai Creek and it will launch ferry services by 2008 to be linked with Dubai Metro and public buses.

The first UITP MENA Congress in Dubai was attended by a large number of leading transport experts from the region and around the world.

Hans Rat, Secretary General of the UITP, said he appreciated Dubai's efforts to introduce integrated public transport systems.

### **Favourable**

"The current period is very favourable for public transport. It is urgent to develop the quality and quantity of transport means offered to citizens in a situation when greenhouse gas emissions are growing, traffic congestion is increasing in all cities, energy prices are continuously rising and road accidents are a crucial issue in many countries," he said.

Dr Ali Abood, Executive Director of Government Sector Development Ministry, said the key challenges facing the countries of the region are mobility and traffic safety.

"The UAE is always keen to provide an integrated public transportation system, through continuous development for the roads network, the railways and the Metro," he said.

## **Traveling in buses to become hassle-free**

By Ashfaq Ahmed, Staff Reporter

Published: November 26, 2007, 00:33

Dubai: Traveling in public buses will be hassle-free in the near future as a new computerized passenger information system and journey planner will be launched, which will help in planning a trip.

Khalid Hashim, Director of Planning and Business Development at the Public Transport Agency of the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), said that the new computerized information system would provide real time information to passengers about bus timings at bus stops and inside buses.

### **Journey planner**

It will cover arrival and departure times, incidents, congestion, news and advertisement on electronic screens at bus stops and inside buses. "We are also working on launching a journey planner, which will enable commuters to plan their journey from home or office," said Hashim.

Journey planner will tell commuters about the time at which a bus will arrive at a particular bus stop and what connections are available to complete the trip from home to office or anywhere else.

### **Complete solution**

Access to journey planner information for commuters will be available via a phone call to an automated speech dialogue system and also through a call centre, via internet and fax.



Commuters will be able to plan a trip by using the Real Time Information System for public transport buses

"The new system will provide a complete solution to plan a journey in Dubai by using public transport," he added.

Commuters will also be able to buy smart cards from vending machines which will be installed at air-conditioned bus stops.

### **Challenges the RTA faces in developing public transport:**

Discouraging the use of cars, which is a status symbol

Encouraging the public to use public transport system

Providing special needs passengers access to transport

Changing traveling habits and making people accept mass transit system

Providing safe, reliable and affordable public transport

Raising public awareness of alternatives to car use

Enacting legislation and regulations to reduce congestion and traffic pollution and

Improve environment schedule

### **Electronic screens**



Commuters will be able to plan a trip by using the Real Time Information System for public transport buses.

It will provide information about the arrival and departure times of buses on electronic screens installed at bus stops and inside buses.

It will also tell about the bus stops and route of the buses.

In addition, passengers will be updated about latest news, traffic congestion and any delays.

The Journey Planner system is also being introduced for the bus users. It will help plan journey from or to any place of interest by taking information via phone, fax and internet

## **Utah County Bus rapid transit a few years off**

A line linking malls and campuses still would be up in time for Provo's commuter rail debut

By Donald W. Meyers

The Salt Lake Tribune

Article Last Updated: 11/27/2007 01:06:52 AM MST

When it is built, Utah County's bus rapid transit (BRT) system will be the state's second.

Utah Transit Authority spokeswoman Carrie Bohnsack-Ware said UTA plans to have a 10-mile BRT along 3500 South in Salt Lake County linking Magna to the north-south TRAX line at the Millcreek Station.

Once that project is done next year, she said, UTA will begin working on Utah County's BRT.

Transportation officials had hoped to bring bus rapid transit (BRT) to Provo by 2009. Now it looks like the system won't arrive until a year or two later.

"We didn't start early enough so we're a little behind," said Chad Eccles, Mountainland Association of Governments' (MAG) transit-project manager. "We may have it by 2010."

Or 2011. Either way, BRT still would be running in time for commuter rail's debut in Provo.

MAG, the Utah Transit Authority and the Utah Department of Transportation are conducting an environmental impact study (EIS), which should be completed by October 2008, of possible BRT routes.

BRT would create a bus line linking Provo Towne Centre, Brigham Young University, University Mall and Utah Valley State College's Orem campus.

Darrell Cook, MAG's executive director, pointed to that clogged corridor as one of the area's most heavily trafficked, particularly by college students.

BRT would work like "TRAX on [bus] wheels," Eccles said. Buses would travel in dedicated lanes for at least part of the route and have priority at traffic signals. They also would stop at stations that resemble the light-rail stops in Salt Lake County.

Cook said the BRT project may involve widening University Parkway with an additional lane to accommodate the buses.

Ultimately, the system would link up with FrontRunner heavy commuter rail to improve service in the area.

"It will be great for BYU game days," Eccles said. "People will be able to take commuter rail to the intermodal station and then go to the stadium on the bus."

BRT is one element of a sweeping transportation overhaul that includes reconstruction of Interstate 15 in Utah County.

"When we start ripping up the interstate," Cook said, "we want the [commuter] rail in place."

Provo Municipal Councilwoman Cynthia Dayton sees BRT as one step toward fixing Provo's student-traffic problem. But she adds that it is not the ultimate cure.

"We need to consider more buses," Dayton said. "We have to get more aggressive in that role."

She said if Provo had better bus service - like Logan, another college town - it would make it easier for BYU students to get around without a car.

Student auto use has become an issue recently as the Municipal Council approved a parking-permit program for the Foothills neighborhood that will practically eliminate student parking on the streets.

Eccles said the EIS is looking at other prospective BRT routes besides the University Avenue-University Parkway corridor.

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## **Branson weighs new mass transit option**

**Didi Tang** News-Leader

**Branson** — After hearing proposals for a monorail in 2001 and a light-rail system in 2006, Branson officials heard a new idea for mass transit Monday.



This time, it was the Personal Rapid Transit — a system that has individual, automated cars moving along elevated tracks.

The idea is so new Branson officials, though intrigued, were far from committing.

"Practicality is yet to be determined," said Assistant City Administrator Frank Schoneboom. "Conceptually, it is a neat idea."

J. Edward Anderson, who holds a Ph.D. in aeronautics and astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, made the presentation. He worked on developing PRT systems for 25 years at the University of Minnesota and Boston University.

He is now the managing director in his new firm, PRT International LLC, which has yet to build a PRT system.

Anderson told Branson officials that all the technologies needed for his system, including hardware and software, have been developed and his company is seeking money to build a test system.

Other companies and universities around the world also are developing similar systems, Anderson said.

But Branson officials have some reservations.

"I need more concrete proof," Schoneboom said. "Not just sentences and documents."

Although Anderson's PRT system could be significantly less expensive than a light-rail system, it could still cost tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars with no assurance of recouping the capital spending, Schoneboom said.

Anderson said it costs about \$4 million to \$4.5 million per mile for the track, but the cost could be significantly lower if the work is outsourced to countries like China.

Schoneboom, however, noted costs of equipment and stations can raise the final price.

High price tags are to blame for Branson's hesitancy to make any significant move into public transit in the last few years.

Anderson apparently understands his challenge.

"Because it's new," he said. "People hate to do something new. That's a major problem."

Anderson said he heard about Branson's interest in public transit through Greg Young of Bolivar, a citizen watchdog of public spending.

Young said he heard Anderson making presentations at conferences and was impressed.

"The system meets our needs for mass transportation," Young said. "It's smaller, inexpensive and more similar to automobile travel."

When Young read about Branson's interest in public transit as well as its concerns about the funding of a \$500 million light-rail system, Young said he thought of Anderson.

"I knew from Dr. Anderson that something might be available soon," Young said.

Several calls later, Young said he got Anderson connected with Branson's city engineers, and a trip for Anderson from Minneapolis came together.

Anderson, who travels with his wife and a PRT International official, said he is paying for the trip.

He is scheduled to meet with Springfield officials Wednesday to talk about the possibilities of providing public transit from Springfield to Branson and St. Louis, Young said.

"Springfield might be too sprawled out for (PRT inside the city)," Young said.

But Branson is a perfect candidate with 8 million tourists a year roaming within a "very small" area, Young said.

"Branson has the congestion problem they are trying to solve," he said.

To solve that problem, Anderson's model has point-to-point transportation on elevated tracks with off-line stations, so the cars won't clog up the main tracks but maintain relatively high speeds.

It is economical to build individual cars, which allow the transit system to simulate automobile travel and attract ridership. Yet, the system can take far less land than roads, and the individual cars are computer-controlled to reduce accidents, he said.

The system also can use sustainable energy, operate around the clock and offer competitive fares because of its lower costs compared with conventional mass transit methods, Anderson said.

He also told city officials that the system would be reliable and safe.

Branson officials told Anderson his idea was interesting, but the Monday meeting ended without any clear indication whether Branson would pursue the proposal.

Several senior citizens attending the meeting, however, were much more eager.

"It's really nice. They should get it started as soon as possible," said Johnny Creed, a resident at Branson Manor.



Billy Pipkin, a fellow resident, said he would be pleased with any public transit.

"City bus, just a couple of them, will be nice," he said.

## Report: \$37 million option for Eastside train

By Keith Ervin Seattle Times staff reporter

BNSF Railway's aging Eastside tracks could easily be modernized to accommodate 40-mph passenger-train service, according to a report from a think tank that opposes using the prized Snohomish-to-Renton right of way only as a recreational trail.

Rather than rip out the tracks, an investment of about \$37 million could make the 42-mile corridor ready for commuter trains to serve Eastside communities, said Read Fay, a retired BNSF regional manager who wrote the report for the Cascadia Center at Discovery Institute.

The institute wants to keep the track that King County Executive Ron Sims would tear out as scrap. Sims proposes building a hiking and biking trail along the right of way, and at some future date adding high-capacity, light-rail transit.

"At this point, we're just trying to save the rails from being torn up, and save the corridor for transportation," Fay said after a forum the Cascadia Center hosted in Woodinville on Tuesday. "... Tearing up rails, history shows us, they don't come back."

Fay's report, combined with the defeat of Proposition 1, has energized a campaign by rail advocates to put diesel trains on the 42-mile corridor that the Port of Seattle plans to buy from BNSF next month.

Voters earlier this month rejected the proposal to build \$11 billion of light-rail lines and \$7 billion of freeway lanes. Bruce Agnew, director of the Cascadia Center, says the Eastside rail line offers "a golden opportunity" to offer passenger-rail service for a fraction of that price.

Cascadia and other save-the-rail activists want Sound Transit to pay for a pilot project that would test the feasibility of small diesel trains between Bellevue and Snohomish. They propose putting a trail next to the existing track.

Sims' chief of staff, Kurt Triplett, dismissed the Cascadia proposal as nothing new.

The Seattle Port Commission has agreed in concept to buy the rail corridor from BNSF for \$103 million and negotiate a deal for King County to lease all or part of it for a dual-use, light-rail-and-trail route.

Fay's estimate it would cost \$37 million to replace substandard track and upgrade bridges to handle passenger trains with higher speeds than freight trains that now use the track. North of Woodinville, he found the steel track, wooden ties and rock ballast are "woefully inadequate," but said they can be quickly and easily replaced with automated machinery.

Fay's estimate didn't include the purchase of train equipment or development of stations. Describing himself as "an operations guy" and not an engineer, Fay said he hadn't looked at the cost of replacing the rail bridge that's being removed in the widening of Interstate 405 at the Wilburton Tunnel in Bellevue.

Agnew estimated the total startup cost of Renton-to-Snohomish rail service at \$125 million, based on the \$92 million cost of building a shorter, 32-mile line in Austin, Texas.

Triplett said Agnew's estimate seems unrealistically low, based on an earlier Puget Sound Regional Council study that pegged the price at \$300 million. If Sound Transit decided to pay for diesel service, Triplett said, "we would be delighted with that. We would have them do that tomorrow. It's not that King County is not trying to have a transportation system on the corridor. We want one. It's that no one is coming with money on the table."

Port Commission President John Creighton said he is skeptical about the feasibility of passenger rail service but wants more information before tearing out the tracks. "Whether or not rail can work on the corridor now, versus 30 years from now, still is an open question," he said. "I would not be in favor of tearing up the tracks until we as a region have time to study it."

Agnew last week wrote to officials of Sound Transit, King County, the Port and BNSF, asking them to support a pilot project using self-propelled, "diesel multiple units," or DMUs, between Snohomish and Bellevue. If successful, the service could be extended to downtown Renton or Tukwila, he said.

Agnew said those trains, using small diesel engines, are lighter, more fuel-efficient and less expensive than



conventional diesel trains. Fay said trains could stop at stations every half-hour, using sidings to pass oncoming trains along the route, which has only one track in most spots.

The Cascadia Center and a grass-roots group, Eastside Rail Now! have suggested that Sound Transit money previously earmarked for a portion of a Seattle-to-Redmond light-rail line be switched to the BNSF corridor.

Sound Transit spokesman Geoff Patrick said that would require the Sound Transit board putting the proposal to a public vote. Patrick said he expected the board to begin discussions soon on what to do in the wake of Proposition 1's failure at the polls.

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## **Houston METRO Places Order for 48 Orion VII Next Generation Hybrids**

**ORISKANY, N.Y. (November 27, 2007)** — DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North America (DCCBNA) received an order of 48 Orion VII Next Generation diesel-electric hybrid transit buses from Houston METRO in Houston, Texas.

"These buses are the cutting edge of hybrid technology," said David Feeley, METRO's Senior Vice President of Operations. "Our passengers will be riding in style on the newly designed Orion VII Next Generation while also helping the environment through the hybrid technology."



### **World-Leading Hybrid Bus:**

The Orion VII Next Generation hybrid buses from DaimlerChrysler are powered by BAE Systems'

HybriDrive® propulsion system that will include for the first time, a lithium-ion energy storage system. Compared to standard diesel propulsion, these hybrid buses deliver up to 30 percent better fuel economy while greatly reducing emissions: 90 percent less particulate matter, 40 percent less NOx and 30 percent fewer greenhouse gases. Drivers and riders enjoy a quieter, cleaner and smoother ride.

"The HybriDrive propulsion system is already proven in several large cities across North America, and this order expands our footprint even further," said Hank McGlynn, vice president of Vehicle Systems for BAE Systems. "The technology achieves peak efficiency in urban environments, so we expect these buses to provide outstanding value to Houston."

### **Next Generation Design:**

Beyond the environmental benefits, Houston METRO's new buses will also have the distinctive new design features now standard on the Orion VII Next Generation. DaimlerChrysler's worldwide design team successfully merged functionality and style on the existing Orion VII platform, which has been on the market since 2001. With European inspiration, the Orion VII Next Generation boasts a smoother, more modern exterior style, an improved ergonomic driver's area and incorporates EPA '07 emission complaint engines.

"With the Orion VII Next Generation's new sleek design, coupled with its EPA 2007 emission changes, Houston METRO will receive the latest and most efficient clean-vehicle technology available," said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for DCCBNA. "The Orion VII Next Generation's design is guaranteed to turn heads and offer superb curb appeal as it navigates the streets of Houston."

## **Jet Set Lines, Inc of Orlando Adds Two New Setra S 417 Motorcoaches to its Fleet**

**GREENSBORO, N.C. (November 21, 2007)** — Jet Set Lines, Inc. of Orlando, Florida, is proud to announce the addition of two new Setra S 417 luxury motorcoaches to its existing fleet. Jet Set is a premier charter and transportation company with eight Setra S 417 motorcoaches in their fleet.

"The Setra S 417 allows us to provide the very best in motorcoach travel to our clients," said Marcelo Concha,



President of Jet Set Lines, Inc. "For us, Setra is our motorcoach manufacturer of choice. From sales to service, Setra has catered to my every need."

Introduced to the North American market in 2003, the Setra S 417 continues to set the benchmark in luxury motorcoach travel by comfort and innovation to both guest and driver alike. The ultra-modern, spacious S 417 interior cabin design provides guests with a state-of-the-art audio system, which includes a CD/DVD player and five 15" monitors positioned throughout the cabin.



The Setra S 417 provides added value through many cost savings benefits for the operator including extended maintenance intervals, an industry-leading multiplex electrical system with self diagnostics, and a low maintenance HVAC system.



"We are pleased to continue our partnership with Jet Set," said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North America. "Jet Set is a valued client and I am certain that these Setra S 417 luxury motorcoaches will fully meet their expectations and continue their tradition of excellence."

Jet Set Line, Inc was founded by Marcelo Concha and his wife, Evguenia Jusakos, in May of 1987. Founded as

a charters and tour company, Jet Set evolved into a charter and line haul company, with daily routes from Orlando to Miami and back. Jet Set's strength lies within its professional and highly experienced staff that excels in all transportation services. Jet Set offers its clients an exceptional fleet coupled with the best transportation professionals in Orlando and Miami.

## **North Carolina's Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation Orders Five Orion VII Next Generation Buses for its Fleet**

**MISSISSAUGA, Ontario. (November 21, 2007) –** DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North America (DCCBNA) received an order of five Orion VII Next Generation clean diesel transit buses from the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) of North Carolina.

The five new Orion VII Next Generation transit buses will be used as part of PART's Express Bus Service, which offers transportation to and from Chapel Hill, Duke Medical, Greensboro, High Point, Mount Airy, Pilot Mountain and Winston-Salem; with expansion service to Davidson and Randolph County coming on line in 2008.



"The Orion VII Next Generation offers us an extremely reliable, clean diesel option for our fleet," said Scott Rhine, operations manager for Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation. "Our passengers will enjoy the sleek new design, but our communities will appreciate the environment benefit these buses provide."

Introduced to the transit market earlier in 2007, the Orion VII Next Generation uses the same proven platform of



the Orion VII with a new, redefined, European-inspired exterior design and an improved ergonomic driver's area. The sleeker style provides a more modern design, giving the Next Generation plenty of curb appeal.

An additional benefit of the Orion VII Next Generation is its cleaner, more efficient diesel engine. The more environmentally-friendly, clean-diesel engine provides an 80-percent improvement in particulate matter and a 50-percent improvement in NOx emissions in comparison to its 2002 predecessor.

"The new Orion VII Next Generation clean diesel transit bus will be a great addition to PART's existing fleet," said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses. "We are proud to continue our partnership with PART. It was very important to us to maintain this relationship and to provide these transit buses to a local agency."

## RDA backs Valpo bus to Chicago

November 28, 2007

By Erik Potter Post-Tribune staff writer

Express bus service from Valparaiso to Chicago should begin by early 2009.

The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority on Tuesday approved a \$2.1 million grant request from the Regional Bus Authority to run a four-bus fleet between the two cities.

The buses take 12 to 18 months to construct, placing the start date for the service anywhere from early to late 2009.

Stu Summers, director of the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission, said the city will use the bus depot, where residents can catch the bus, as an anchor for an 11-acre mixed-use development at the corner of Lincolnway and Campbell on the west side of the city's downtown.

The RBA also had requested an additional \$2.1 million for four buses that would be used for an express service from Lake County locations to Chicago.

The RDA referred that request to committee, however, pending more information on potential ridership and pickup locations.

RBA director Ken Dallmeyer said he hopes to have the information ready for the RDA's January committee meeting.

In other business, RDA board members turned down a \$125,000 request by the Indiana High-Speed Rail Association to study the impact of high-speed rail on the Gary/Chicago International Airport.

The proposed rail line would run from Chicago to Gary and Valparaiso.

Board members hesitated at pursuing the South Shore expansion and high-speed rail development at the same time and also wanted to see more input on the idea from the airport as well as the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, which runs the South Shore rail line.

KYW Newsradio

## SEPTA Says It Will Move to Smart Cards -- Eventually

by KYW's Steve Tawa



SEPTA wants to overhaul the way it collects fares, and will soon put out a request for bids for using "smart card" technology throughout the system. But it's still a ways down the road.

The tipping point in moving toward an electronic payment and automated fare collection system for SEPTA was the financial industry's development of technologies beyond magnetic swipe cards to a "contactless" media.

SEPTA planning manager Jerry Kane:

"What we are looking at is a network of contactless readers on our turnstiles and our bus system that would have the ability to read not only a SEPTA-issued contactless card but have the ability to read what we carry in our wallets today."

SEPTA says it has closely followed how similar transit agencies around the country have rolled out new payment technologies -- including Boston's MBTA, Chicago's CTA, and Atlanta's MARTA.

Those systems took at least five to seven years for the design, test, and build out phases, costing between \$120



million and \$190 million.

SEPTA plans to put out requests for proposals in the first quarter of next year and award a contract around next year at this time.

## Rift with feds stalls electrification project

Nov 21, 2007 5:00 AM (10 days ago) by Mike Rosenberg, The Examiner

**SAN MATEO-** Caltrain's 16-year, \$471 million electrification project is idling as the agency battles with the Federal Railroad Administration over a waiver to use a type of car that would further speed up and add more trips.



Examiner file photo)  
Caltrain's 16-year, \$471 million electrification project is idling as the agency battles with the Federal Railroad Administration over a waiver to use a type of car that would further speed up and add more trips.

Caltrain wants to use cars called electric multiple units similar to ones used by BART, spokesman Jonah Weinberg said. The units would be individually powered. The problem, according to the FRA, is that the cars are not allowed on railroads that serve diesel trains. Caltrain's project would run cars on existing railroad tracks used by locomotives but be powered by electrical wires directly above.

In a 2000 report, the FRA concluded that electric rails operating on the same railroad featuring older locomotives "pose major safety issues," including the increased likelihood of a collision.

The alternative would be a system in which the front car pulls the rest of the electric train, a method that would be an improvement over the current diesel train but would not be as quick as the electric multiple units, Weinberg said. Caltrain should make a decision within 18 months, he said.

The agency needs to submit a waiver request to the FRA Railroad Safety Board, spokesman Steve Kulm said. The administration's local office would conduct an investigation into what the safety issues are and may ask Caltrain to meet certain criteria before the safety board makes a decision, Kulm said.

The FRA did not comment on the likelihood of this specific waiver passing, but it has provided similar waivers to transportation agencies in Utah and New Jersey. One of the key aspects of allowing both types of rails to operate is to ensure they run at different times of the day to minimize collision opportunities, according to the FRA.

But whatever type of car is chosen, Caltrain is expected to begin construction around 2011; electric trains should be up and running by 2014, Weinberg said.

The project would allow trains to accelerate and stop faster, therefore expediting and adding trips, Weinberg said. It would also save the transit agency about \$10 million per year; make maintenance easier; and be quieter, safer and more environmentally friendly, he said.

The renovation involves adding poles connected to wires above the existing tracks from San Francisco to San Jose. Routes south of that point will still run diesel trains.

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## Elite craftsmen keep S.F. cable cars in good shape

Rachel Gordon, Chronicle Staff Writer  
Monday, December 3, 2007

Every day, elite craftsmen work at preserving history at the San Francisco Municipal Railway's carpentry shop, where the city's iconic cable cars are built from scratch.

Their work is slow and exacting.



The cable car at left is being built from scratch, while the one at right is undergoing an overhaul. Chronicle photo by Michael Macor

Individually, their trades are not unique. Most are trained carpenters. One started as an ironworker, and another is



an expert patternmaker who learned the metal-forming trade from his father back in the Chinese province of Guangdong.

Together, however, theirs is an only-in-San Francisco mission: The city had the first - and now has the last - cable car system operating on public streets, and the aging fleet needs constant care.

"We build everything from the ground up," said Bob Harris, a 52-year-old supervisor at the carpentry shop tucked between the Dogpatch and Potrero Hill neighborhoods on the city's east side.

Since 1986, the city has built 11 new cable cars to replace ones so badly deteriorated that restoration would have been futile. The 12th new one is now on the shop floor and already has been four years in the making. It isn't expected to carry its first fare-paying customers for eight months to a year.

The men who build and renovate the cable cars humbly say their jobs rely primarily on common sense - start with the I-beams, then build the floor, the frame, the roof. It doesn't take long, however, for them to start talking about the pride they have in their craftsmanship.

"It's a dream job for a carpenter, especially for someone who grew up in the city," said Dave Valstad, a 55-year-old native San Franciscan who leads the crew. His grandfather was a city streetcar conductor.

"To be able to say you built a landmark is pretty cool, don't you think?"

They chisel, steam and saw wood. They cut, bend and solder metals.

They stretch the canvas that covers the top of the cable cars to protect against rain and fog, and shape the contoured, slatted wooden seats that keep passengers from slipping off when the cable cars take the heart-pounding turns.

The running boards are made from knot-free fir and then wrapped in steel. Red oak is used for the chassis, white oak for the seats. The roof is cedar.

Molds are crafted on site for the flag holders, plaques and the famous bells that insiders know as "gongs." The foundry work is then done by outside companies. Muni's machine shop, in a nearby building, fabricates other specialty metal parts for the cable cars.

About the only things purchased off the shelf are hinges, screws and lightbulbs.

In the end, the hours of labor transform into San Francisco's moving monuments.

Little has changed since the first cable cars were built in the late 1800s.

Only a handful of tweaks have been made over the years, most to improve safety: The frame has been strengthened with I-beams; thick steel "horns" that jut in front of the running boards have been added to improve protection for the standing passengers; plywood has been swapped for tongue-and-groove fir on the floor base; and steel has been added to the front frame.

"But all in all, they got it right more than 100 years ago," Harris said.

By word and deed, the five carpenters and one patternmaker strive for excellence.

They work off some of the original blueprints - or copies of them - and eyeball the details of the working cable cars to see how their pieces fit together. Rows of hand-crafted templates for most of the pieces are stacked neatly in the loft above the workshop.

The cost to build a new cable car: about \$1 million.

Because the cable cars are a National Historic Landmark, the look of the new ones can't stray much from the designs made more than a century ago.



Known officially as No. 15, the car now under construction will eventually run on the tourist-heavy Powell lines.

It is built in the style perfected by the Mahoney Bros., the firm tapped in 1887 to build cable cars for the burgeoning city. The Mahoney style is known for its intricate roof that has a curved, raised section fitted with windows that filter more light and ventilation into the interior.

Usually, it takes about two years to build a cable car. The longer-than-normal gestation period for No. 15 had a lot to do with the loss of three seasoned employees in the shop.

When No. 15 leaves the carpentry shop, it will be trucked to the cable car barn on Nob Hill. There, it will be painted and fitted with its mechanical components, including the grip used to move the car. The christening probably will take place in the summer or fall of 2008.

"We want to get it perfect," Harris said. That's a rare concept for city government, and especially for a workhorse agency like Muni, which carries nearly 700,000 riders a day.



Chronicle / Michael Macor

Carpenter Pete Cunha keeps the shop floor clean during construction of the new cable car. Chronicle photo by Michael Macor

When not building new cable cars, the carpenters work on San Francisco's fleet of historic streetcars, which run

along Market Street and the Embarcadero, and on overhauling the existing cable cars.

Cable Car No. 25, for instance, is now in the shop for an extensive restoration. It was built by the Ferries & Cliff Railway in 1888-90 and last had a major face-lift in 1990, according to Muni records.

The average lifespan of a cable car is 100 years, a milestone passed by many of the 40 still in operation. Muni tries to overhaul them every 40 years or so, but a lot need work more often, beaten by the rain and fog and hard work of hauling tourists and locals up and down the hills.

"It's like being in a continual earthquake, the way they move," said John Barberini, 57, one of the newcomers to the crew who grew up riding the cable cars.

Over the years, city politicians and transportation bureaucrats have tried to get rid of the cable cars, but citizen activists have always fought back - and won.

Although the system has been pared back considerably since its heyday in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, its future was guaranteed when, in 1971, voters locked a minimum level of cable car service into the San Francisco City Charter.

That public support and a subsequent engineering assessment, which found a badly deteriorated system, led to a shutdown and major overhaul of the entire operation between 1982 and 1984. The work included replacing old tracks and cable channels, installing new turntables, rebuilding the cable car barn and overhauling 37 cable cars.

But like the Golden Gate Bridge, which requires continuous painting to guard against the elements, the work on the cable cars never will be finished.

That's fine by Peter Cunha, a former ironworker who refined his trade at Bay Area wineries. Now 44, he has worked on the cable cars for the past 7 1/2 years.



He appreciates the benefits and protections that come with a city job, but his work at the cable car carpentry shop has more meaning, he said.

"In the late 1800s, early 1900s, cable cars were just transportation, but now they're a lot more than that," said Cunha. "They're a real symbol of San Francisco. They're unique - not just something you can grab from the shelf."

## Jury orders transit agency to pay the firms it sued

By William C. Lhotka and Ken Leiser  
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH  
12/01/2007

**CLAYTON** — After spending millions of dollars on lawyers, accountants and expert witnesses, the Metro public transportation agency got nothing Friday for its investment in its \$81 million civil damage suit against four design and construction management companies.

Instead of verdicts in favor of Metro — which alleged negligence, breach of contract and fraud by the four companies in the delays and cost overruns of the eight-mile light-rail extension to Clayton and Shrewsbury — the jury found in favor of the joint venture.

Jurors in St. Louis County Circuit Court awarded \$2.56 million to the Cross County Collaborative consisting of Parsons Brinckerhoff, STV Inc., Jacobs Engineering Group Inc. and Kwame Building Group.

Officers of those companies were jubilant over the verdicts. They included Bob Niemietz and Robert St. John, both St. Louis-area residents who have worked for years on MetroLink design here; Tony Thompson, president of locally based Kwame; and the defendants' battalion of lawyers.

"I don't think people have an appreciation for what all the firms had to go through the last four years," Thompson said after the verdict.

Metro lawyers sat in stunned silence as presiding Judge Carolyn C. Whittington read the nine verdicts — seven of them with zero damages for Metro and two with the awards for the collaborative for work it claimed it had performed but wasn't paid for.

Then Whittington read each verdict again at the request of Metro lawyer Gordon Ankney and asked jurors if that was their verdict and their signature on each one.

"We're disappointed," Ankney said in an interview. "The saving grace is that we have a great (light-rail) system and we are happy about that, and we feel the actions we took were necessary to do that."

Ankney said Metro will consider an appeal.

Thus ended a trial that began 100 days ago Friday, on Aug. 22, with another Metro lawyer, Jan Paul Miller, alleging that the delay of the MetroLink opening by 15 months and most of the project's cost overruns were the fault of the design and management companies.

Between the openers and the verdict, Metro put on about 30 live witnesses and another two dozen by videotape, and put up scores of documents on two screens for the jury to read. Then the defense put on more than a dozen witnesses of its own, plus numerous exhibits. Metro concluded with four more rebuttal witnesses.

"There were days that seemed longer than the whole trial," said juror Charles Seris, an art teacher in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. Seris said he had some difficulty reading corporate e-mails on the large screen, and even got a new pair of glasses during the trial.

At the beginning, jurors also complained about fluorescent lights above the judge's bench that were either flickering or burned out. The judge had them fixed at the jury's request.

At the jury's request, Whittington brought a gavel to court Friday — she had never used one during the trial — and slammed it down to formally end what attorneys have called the longest civil trial in St. Louis County history.

Before officially declaring it over, Whittington told the 12: "We are so lucky in St. Louis County to have you and people like you to come to court and serve as jurors."

## MEDIATION FAILED

As lawyers, jurors and reporters mingled in the courtroom and talked about the case, Metro President Larry Salci slipped out a back courtroom door and was unavailable for comment.

Salci and then-Metro Vice President Steve Knobbe were the primary movers in the summer of 2004 to terminate the contracts with the four companies and to take over the project itself.

On the day Metro took over, it sued the collaborative, and that sparked a three-year legal war. Metro hired experts: accountants, engineers, lawyers. Trial testimony gave only hints at how much has been spent — a million dollars on that expert, \$3 million on another, so many million in legal fees. Metro had three law firms representing it.

At one point, Whittington sent the case to mediation. That failed. Recently, Judge Bernhardt C. Drumm Jr. was asked to intervene and attempt to work out a



settlement. That, too, failed.

There were no allegations in the trial that the major contractors that actually built the system were at fault. Their officials testified about the delays they encountered.

They complained about some of the design work. But they also testified about other problems that could not be attributed to the joint venture.

On Monday, Whittington read page after page of legal instructions and gave the jury nine verdict forms. Seven accused the companies of either negligence, breach of contract, negligent misrepresentation or civil fraud.

Metro lawyers urged jurors to make the joint venture partners pay — and pay big — more than \$81 million.

The evidence didn't prove it to the jurors — 10 of them voting for the joint venture on almost every verdict, and two siding with Metro. Nine jurors were needed to reach a verdict.

Defense attorneys Tim Thornton and James Bennett made it personal, saying the reputations of the individual engineers and architects who worked on the project had their professional lives at stake.

"We are quite satisfied that our clients have been vindicated," said lead defense lawyer Richard Hardcastle. "After four months, we think they got it right."

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**WINTER PARK** - With one day to spare before possibly losing \$180 million in federal funding, CSX Transportation and the state Thursday reached the final deal needed for the region's first commuter-rail system.

The agreement turns over 61 miles of tracks from DeLand to Orlando to Poinciana. That means the first leg of the project -- from Fort Florida Road in DeBary to Sand Lake Road in Orange County -- is on track to open in summer 2010.

And at that point, nine daily freight trains -- the bane of harried commuters -- will be moved out of the heart of Orlando and rerouted around the city toward Winter Haven.

Both sides had been negotiating for months over several issues, including how to deal with liability. The two sides finally agreed that new commuter-rail system would carry \$200 million in insurance to cover accidents

between trains.

U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park, a longtime supporter of commuter rail, announced the deal Thursday at the Amtrak train station in Winter Park.

"I'm pleased to announce that another milestone has been passed," said Mica, who is the ranking member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. "It's one of the most important steps to make commuter rail a reality."

Without the deal, which will be signed today, Central Florida would have to wait another year to apply for needed federal funds.

Mica noted that although he could not guarantee when the federal money would be awarded, the money from the Federal Transit Administration is "as certain as anything can be."

Half of the \$615 million system will be paid for by the federal government, 25 percent from the state and 25 percent from Volusia, Seminole, Orange and Osceola counties and Orlando.

All five governments voted unanimously for the project earlier this year.

A separate \$491 million agreement between CSX and the state of Florida covers several items, including the 61 miles of track, improvements to the freight line that will carry the extra freight traffic and several new or improved rail crossings in Alachua, Marion and Sumter counties.

Mica also noted that adding a Sand Lake station to the first phase of construction should be good news for those traveling to or from Orlando International Airport because it's expected to have bus and van connections to OIA.

The rest of the system -- a northern spur from DeBary to DeLand and a longer southern stretch from Sand Lake Road to Poinciana -- is scheduled to open in 2013.

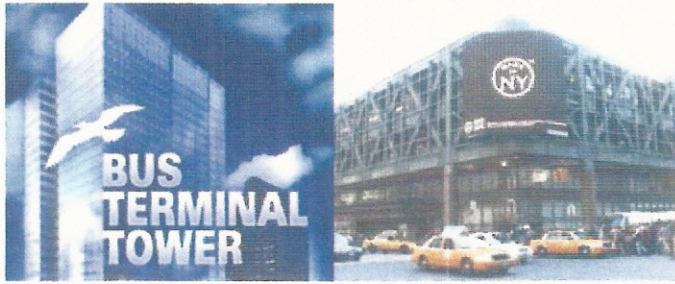
**Jay Hamburg** | Sentinel Staff Writer

November 30, 2007 Jay Hamburg can be reached at [jhamburg@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:jhamburg@orlandosentinel.com)



# Port Authority Bus Terminal Will Get a Tower

November 30, 2007



The low-slung Port Authority bus terminal will be getting a heady addition: The Port Authority will announce a deal for a tower to be built at its north end. The NY Times reports that Lawrence Ruben Company and Vornado Realty Trust is buying air rights for \$400-500 million, which the Port Authority will then be used to add 18 bus platforms, give the terminal a "major face-lift" and overall refurbishing. Well, finally - commuting to and from NJ via the Port Authority is depressing. It's fine for other bus travelers who aren't there on a regular basis, but the Port Authority can be really depressing if you're taking the NJ Transit or Shortline buses everyday. (Penn Station, while not fun, is at least brighter - and the NJ Transit area was renovated.)

A Port Authority spokesperson said, "We've been working very hard to reach an agreement that leverages substantial private money to reinvest for the benefit of our customers, the neighborhood and the region." And it seems that the agency was quick to seize on the "Across from the Port Authority Bus Terminal" real estate fever: Back in February, one real estate executive said, and "The new southern terminus of the acceptable business district has been established."

## NJ Transit commuters could get another train option

By KHURRAM SAEED  
THE JOURNAL NEWS

(Original publication: November 30, 2007)

Residents in southern Orangetown could ditch the bus or their cars and take the train to their jobs in Manhattan or New Jersey if a proposed passenger rail line in northern New Jersey is built.

NJ Transit is looking to transform a freight line and put either diesel-powered trains or electric light rail on 16 miles of track between Tenafly and North Bergen with hopes of opening the Northern Branch Line within five years.

NJ Transit officials note that Rockland ridership is not being counted on or factored in for the north-south line,

but the project could give Rockland commuters who work in Hoboken or Jersey City another way to get there.

One plan calls for the line to start in Tenafly, N.J., which is a 10-mile, 15-minute drive from Tappan or a slightly longer drive down the Palisades Interstate Parkway. Tenafly could be a desirable alternative for residents of Piermont, Sparkill and Nyack who are looking to go south but who don't want to drive west to Pearl River for NJ Transit's Pascack Valley line.

"All of this stuff is sort of like a spider web. Once you put in a new line, you don't know what's going to happen to it," said former Palisades resident Gil Hawkins, who is currently a councilman for the borough of Leonia, N.J., which might have a stop along the line.

The line was once part of the Erie Railroad, and trains carried commuters and passengers from downtown Nyack to Jersey City, N.J., until 1966. In Orangetown, much of the line was converted into a rail trail. Freight trains run on the tracks in New Jersey's Bergen and Hudson counties.

The project is in the early stages of its environmental review.

The project was originally proposed several years ago as an extension of NJ Transit's Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system. Since then, NJ Transit has introduced the idea of using diesel-powered trains, to the dismay of some who believe the trains would be noisier and create more air pollution. Eventually, the trains could provide a one-seat ride to Manhattan through NJ Transit's proposed rail tunnel under the Hudson River.

Steven Santoro, NJ Transit's assistant executive director of capital planning and programs, said the transit agency is conducting a head-to-head comparison of the benefits, liabilities, cost and potential ridership of both rail modes.

Santoro said the comparison will be part of the draft environmental impact statement, which will be published in the summer of 2008. Public hearings on both light rail and diesel trains will follow, and NJ Transit will then make a decision toward the end of next year.

The environmental review will address a number of issues, including station locations. NJ Transit's initial plans call for a park-and-ride lot in Tenafly, which might prove inviting to Rockland drivers.

"I'm not at all happy that they've chosen Tenafly to be the end of the line," said Tenafly Mayor Peter Rustin, who expressed concerns about outsiders driving in and clogging up the streets. "We have terrible traffic problems as it is."

The borough has five crossings within a mile of each other, and diesel trains, which could run as often as



every 15 minutes at times, would be required to blow their horns at each crossing.

Hawkins, the Leonia councilman interested in seeing the project move ahead, said there is a brewing controversy among public officials and NJ Transit about the type of train that might travel through bedroom communities.

Hawkins favored light rail because it is less environmentally invasive and can carry more people.

NJ Transit has since introduced the idea of self-propelled diesel trains because it said they could be brought into service faster, funding for them could come quicker, they would be cheaper than light rail and could provide the valuable one-seat ride into Manhattan, although they would likely have to be dual-fitted with electric service to travel through the tunnel.

Hawkins said he had been left with the sense of being "hoodwinked" and a "bait-and-switch kind of feeling" from NJ Transit.

"We're really being steered rather than being given options," Hawkins said of NJ Transit.

Douglas John Bowen, president of the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers, said his group has been largely responsible for keeping light rail in the discussion.

He said NJ Transit had pledged to bring light rail to Bergen County.

"We're holding them to it," he said.

Bowen doubted that the Trans-Hudson Express Tunnel would have the extra capacity to accommodate additional trains from the Northern Branch Line, as the project is already being scaled down.

Even without the direct ride, commuters using diesel trains would be able to get to Manhattan, but it would include changing trains. People would first transfer to the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Line in North Bergen, get off at Hoboken and take a PATH train to Manhattan.

Building light rail could cost hundreds of millions of dollars more than diesel. NJ Transit said the costs are being studied. Bowen said light rail was more energy efficient in the long term than diesel trains, far quieter and could carry more passengers at a lower cost.

One of the issues being considered is running freight on the line, which is owned by CSX Transportation. Freight trains would be able to run at the same time with diesel-powered trains, also known as heavy rail. But by federal law, freight trains are not allowed to operate during the same window as light rail, meaning they might be able to run only at night.

Orrin Getz, Rockland's liaison for the New Jersey Association for Railroad Passengers, said after the Northern Branch Line was built, regardless of the mode running on it, perhaps one day the line could be extended into Rockland if the market demanded it. Of course, that would mean converting trails back into rail tracks.

"Nobody has ever done that," Getz said, "but it would be a very interesting case."

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## All aboard?

Sunday, December 02, 2007

BY ANDREW KITCHENMAN

**EWING** -- The West Trenton Train Station is quiet after the weekday morning rush hour, the parking lot and platform reduced to gravel after years of use as the end of a Pennsylvania commuter line.

When the number of passengers on NJ Transit's West Trenton line dwindled to 200 in 1982, the agency pulled the plug, leaving the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) to maintain the station.

While many proposals to revive the line have been floated in the past 25 years, recent studies on restarting the line are more advanced than at any time since the line ended. The public will have a chance to weigh in on the potential revival of a second Mercer County rail link to North Jersey at a public meeting Thursday in Ewing.

"This is something that should be a priority from both a state and a federal perspective," Assemblyman W. Reed Gusciora, D-Princeton Borough, said of the line.

The projected \$219 million project's future is uncertain because NJ Transit hasn't figured out how it will pay for the project and has listed other projects ahead of West Trenton in the line for funding. However, local officials are intensely interested in seeing whether the line can be revived, providing relief for residents interested in traveling north without using the heavily used Northeast Corridor line.

"We're going to have to take a look at ideas like reopening the WT line simply because of the pressures that are on our system already," Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes said.

The rail line was first built in the 1870s by the Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad and continued as a passenger line under various owners for more than 100 years. The line is still maintained south of the West Trenton Station by SEPTA, which uses it for its R3 line. North of West Trenton, CSX Transportation maintains a single track for freight traffic.



The project would include a series of improvements, including new tracks and train cars; a new rail yard and 90 new parking spaces in West Trenton, as well as new stations in West Trenton, near Interstate 95 in Hopewell Township, Hopewell Borough, the Belle Mead section of Montgomery, and Hillsborough. The 27-mile line would link with the NJ Transit's Raritan Valley line in Bridgewater before heading to Newark, where passengers would transfer to go to New York.

The new stations would be basic structures with canopies and windscreens to protect passengers from the elements, according to NJ Transit spokesman Joseph Dee. The exception is the Belle Mead station, where an existing structure could be renovated. There also is a small red-brick building in West Trenton, but the large original West Trenton Station was sold in 1989 to Clarke Caton Hintz, an architectural firm that renovated the building for office use.

Hopewell Township Mayor Vanessa Sandom said she supports the concept in a general way, but township officials want to know the plan's specifics, such as the exact location of stations.

"As a concept, whenever you move people out of car and into mass transit, the state as a whole benefits, and that includes Hopewell Township," Sandom said. "I think there's a great deal of interest in the town."

Sandom wants to make sure that parking and traffic concerns are worked out by NJ Transit.

A \$3.3 million environmental assessment found the project would have no significant impact on either the environment, traffic or the historical heritage of the area around the line.

Jack Kanarek, NJ Transit senior director of project development, said the assessment was done with the expectation that it wouldn't cause problems because the line has been used in the past.

"The goal of these documents is to plan for the project," Kanarek said.

NJ Transit plans to finalize the assessment after the public comment period closes. From that point forward, nothing is certain.

"There just isn't any funding that's available," Kanarek said.

If the agency finds a way to restart the line, the trip from West Trenton to Newark's Penn Station would be one hour and 20 minutes, which is longer than the trip from the Trenton Train Station to Newark, which ranges from 45 minutes to one hour and 20 minutes depending on the time and the number of stops.

NJ Transit projects that the West Trenton line would generate 2,660 daily trips by 2025 if the line was restarted.

Ewing resident Steve Carroll said it would be convenient to start trips to visit friends in Boston by taking a train from West Trenton.

"It would be nice to park right here," said Carroll, whose family operates Carroll Service Center, a Gulf gas station across Railroad Avenue from the West Trenton station.

Ewing Mayor Jack Ball said the possible rail line could relieve local traffic to employers like Merrill Lynch.

"I definitely think it would be of benefit to our residents and I think it's important to encourage people to use mass transit," said Ball, who cautioned that the state's difficult financial straits could make funding the project difficult.

Mercer County Freeholder Lucy Walter noted that these trips would provide relief for local drivers, as well as the Northeast Corridor trains. That line's Hamilton and Princeton Junction stations are at or exceeding their parking capacity. Walter urged the county to support the expansion.

"I think Mercer County and certainly the whole corridor that we live in is heavily populated," Walter said. "Everybody knows that and we can't keep putting cars on the roads." Walter, a Ewing resident, said the project should be a priority for both NJ Transit and the federal government.

"This project should have been in place long before all of the housing developments were allowed to be built," Walter said.

On a recent day at the West Trenton Station, New York resident Elijah Rodriguez said he would like to be able to take a northbound train from West Trenton. He was returning from a week visiting his girlfriend and newborn son in Lower Moreland, Pa.

Rodriguez said he took a taxi from Trenton to Ewing to take the R3 to its Bethayres station.

"That would be a whole lot more convenient," he said of a new rail line.

The public meeting on the draft environmental assessment will be Thursday from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Ewing Senior/Community Center, 999 Lower Ferry Road. NJ Transit will accept comments on the plan until Jan. 15.

NJ Transit's board of directors would then decide whether to have the project advance to a preliminary design.



Even if the board of directors decides to proceed, many details would have to be worked out. These include reaching an agreement with CSX on splitting the line's use between commuter and freight, as well as Merrill Lynch's concern that no parking be located on its side of the proposed Interstate 95 station.

Both Gusciora and Hughes expressed hope the next federal administration could bolster the project's chances by increasing funding for mass transit.

The assessment is available on the Web at [www.njtransit.com](http://www.njtransit.com), under the system expansion section of the capital projects page.

Contact Andrew Kitchenman at [akitchenman@njtimes.com](mailto:akitchenman@njtimes.com) or (609) 989-5706.

**NEW YORK** -- In the nine weeks after starting her first full-time teaching job, Long Island Rail Road commuter Robin Larsen was late to work four times.



She always caught the 5:37 a.m. train out of Patchogue, aiming to stand before her seventh-grade English class at IS 216 in the Bronx by 8 a.m. The blame, she said, lies with the LIRR's unreliable, breakdown-prone diesel trains, with her sitting in a disabled train or waiting on the platform for one that dragged in late.

"Being late is not something I can continue to do, or else I could not have a job next September," said Larsen, 27.

This is the LIRR's diesel dilemma -- for the railroad and for the 10,000 passengers a day riding those troubled trains, about 5 percent of the fleet. Eight years after 46 diesel and "dual-mode" locomotives were built specifically for the LIRR and bought for \$152 million, their track record is dismal: They break down twice as often as anyone had predicted.

What's more, the General Motors division that made them exclusively for the LIRR has shut down. The warranty on most parts for the trains has expired, officials said. That has left the LIRR with several dozen

troubled trains unlike any others in the world, built by a GM division that no longer exists.

"It is obvious that the entire diesel fleet is in serious trouble," former Metro-North Railroad President Don Nelson, acting as a consultant for the LIRR, wrote in a survey in October. Nelson pointed out a host of especially profound problems with the dual-mode locomotives. If they "can't be made more reliable soon," the consultant wrote, "the LIRR will be forced to deal with the fact that these units are lemons ..."

The diesel trains, easily identified by their handsome double-decker passenger cars, travel along the system's Oyster Bay, Port Jefferson and Montauk branches, and the Ronkonkoma branch east of Ronkonkoma. Twenty-three of the locomotives are diesel and 22 are dual-modes, which can switch between diesel and electric power. (One dual-mode was destroyed by fire several years ago.)

Last year, dual-modes broke down, on average, every 14,595 miles -- more than twice the 30,000 miles projected between breakdowns. By comparison, the LIRR's newest electric trains only broke down an average of every 303,604 miles last year.

LIRR President Helena Williams, acknowledging that diesel malfunctions have caused many delays, said the agency has hired a separate consultant to determine whether they should be replaced or repaired. She expects an initial report by year's end.

The LIRR's staff acknowledges it might be a difficult problem to fix. The trains -- debuting in 1999, more than a year after they'd been pledged to be running -- were to provide 30 years of service. At this rate "that's not looking very promising," said Ray Kenny, the LIRR's senior vice president of operations.

The problem with the dual-mode trains appears fundamental to their nature: Kenny said the locomotives most commonly have problems while switching between diesel and electric modes. The age of the track on certain lines, and the prohibitive cost and extreme difficulty of electrifying the entire system, is what drives the LIRR's need for diesel trains. While most sections of track have an electrified third rail that powers trains, some older sections do not and rely entirely on diesel power.

But exhaust from diesel trains prevents them from going into enclosed stations such as Penn Station, while a dual-mode can enter once it switches over to electric power. The addition of dual-modes to the fleet allowed passengers who use stations along diesel-only tracks from having to transfer to electric trains -- most often at the Jamaica station -- before traveling into Penn Station. LIRR officials said they asked GM to manufacture locomotives especially for them that were able to speed up and slow down just as quickly as traditional electric



trains. That was necessary, Kenny said, to assure traffic is not backed up in and out of Penn.

Metro-North Railroad uses dual-modes built by General Electric and purchased around the same time, officials there said. By all accounts, theirs are working much better than those on the LIRR -- breaking down half as often. Metro-North reported average breakdowns every 36,714 miles in 2006.

Although the LIRR's strictly diesel trains have had problems, also breaking down far more than LIRR officials would like, the dual-modes most consistently delayed commuters, befuddled mechanics and caused headaches for LIRR brass. "Clearly, they're breaking down too often," Kenny said, "The diesel shop is very put-upon."

Officials say it's not uncommon to see the same locomotive reappear in their repair shop every few weeks. Compared to electric trains, "we do a lot more maintenance on them," said Charlie Cicalo, an LIRR master mechanic. "A lot more."

Pete Volpe, an electrician who spends his days tinkering with troubled dual-modes, said the complexity of the one-of-a-kind locomotives creates lots of potential for breakdowns. "There are so many computers ... that every time there's a glitch, you've got seven computers that can shut down," Volpe said.

Despite mechanics' best efforts, problems persist for commuters. Gerard Bringmann, president of the LIRR Commuter's Council, believes the diesels should be junked and replaced, a suggestion he made in a recent letter to railroad higher-ups.

"The condition of the diesel fleet is taking a major toll on Long Island commuters in terms of stress and impacts on social and family life," wrote Bringmann, a regular diesel rider. "Equipment breakdowns on the LIRR are jeopardizing some commuters' performance evaluations ... and in some cases ... their continued employment."

Larsen, the teacher from Patchogue, knows she can't continue to be late. Her students suffer too, she said, because they fall behind as last-minute substitute teachers unfamiliar with her lesson plans struggle to fill in.

"Most of the time I end up having to make up that work with them the next day," she said.

Although the length of her commute also wears on her, Larsen said the unreliability of the diesel fleet ultimately won't allow her to keep the job.

"I'm not a tenured teacher, so what school in their right mind is going to welcome me back, knowing I could be late so many times?" she asked. "Honestly, I've already accepted the fact that I am going to have to look for something on Long Island in September."

(The preceding article by Steve Ritea was published December 2, 2007, by Newsday.)

## Councillors admit finding cash, deciding what to build first 'difficult'

Jake Rupert, The Ottawa Citizen

Published: Thursday, November 29, 2007

City council set the municipality on a new \$2-billion transit path yesterday when it approved a series of projects as immediate priorities, but the questions of what to build first and how to pay for the projects remain unanswered.

With very little dissent, council set its top priorities as a downtown tunnel, light rail to the south of the city, completing and extending the bus transitway to the west and Barrhaven, and developing a dedicated transit route in the east.

The city will now apply to the federal and provincial governments to release \$200 million each had committed to the now cancelled north-south light-rail project to pay for the projects that are ready to go.

Other aspects of the system, including the tunnel, will be built when the requisite studies are done and funding is secured.

Gloucester-South Nepean Councillor Steve Desroches, whose ward will be served by light rail under the new plan, said it provides "practical transit solutions to all parts of the city."

However, he said agreeing on a vision for the future of transit was the easy step.

"Deciding what we do first and finding the money to pay for these things is going to be difficult," he said. "Council will have to work together to solve those issues, and I don't expect it to be as easy as what we've just done."

The new approach will be anchored by a downtown tunnel, which is currently being costed and studied for feasibility by city staff.

Staff said a choice will be made by this spring on what kind of transit vehicles will run in the tunnel; so far, light-rail is the leading contender.

Once that choice is made, the required technology will eventually be used in all other branches of the system, including two other priorities included in the plan -- bringing rail service to the south of the city and building the Cumberland transit line.

The Cumberland transit line, if based on light rail, would run roughly from Trim Road, parallel to Innes Road, to the Blair transit station and downtown on the existing



bus transitway -- which would be converted to light rail -- and into the tunnel. City staff is also looking at the possibility of extending light rail through downtown to the west on the existing transitway and stopping, for now, at a station at the Queensway.

All buses into the city from the suburbs would then stop at the Queensway and Blair stations and riders would transfer to the light-rail system.

Another priority is completion of the western bus transitway to connect downtown to the Kanata and Stittsville areas, and the extension of the bus transitway in Barrhaven. City staff says in the future, these bus transitways could be converted to light rail.

The city's deputy city manager of transit, planning and the environment, Nancy Schepers, said the new approach will result in a system that will be a benefit for generations to come, and if it gets derailed, it could set transit in the municipality back decades.

"This makes perfect sense," Ms. Schepers said in an interview. "It allows for a phasing in of a citywide transit plan that will move people quickly and efficiently for years to come.

"It sets clear priorities that are practical and that will lead logically to the next step and the next step until there is a citywide integrated system. It really has the potential to transform the city if done right."

River Councillor Maria McRae moved the motion containing the new plan after working on it along with Mr. Desroches, Mayor Larry O'Brien and other councillors on the city's transit committee and transit bureaucrats.

She said after a year of stumbling on the transit file since the old light-rail plan was cancelled, the city is back on track.

"It's really been a terrible year for transit issues and a lot of division was created on this council by the decision to cancel the old project, but we're getting things moving again," she said.

"This is going to help with congestion downtown and on our roads and provide a first-class public transit system for the city. Our public deserves better than what we have now, and if we want to grow transit ridership, this is the way to go."

Mr. O'Brien voted against the old plan because it didn't have a tunnel. He has been pushing for one since the first days of his election campaign in the summer of 2006.

Mr. O'Brien said he was delighted that council has decided to make a tunnel the centrepiece of its new transit direction.

"We can now move forward on transit," he said. "This is the kind of project we need to help make this city what it can be."

Bay Councillor Alex Cullen said it is going to be a challenge for the cash-strapped city to come up with the money for its share of the cost of the plan, but he's confident a way will be found. He said the provincial and federal governments have been saying they want to get into the transit funding business in a big way, so it will soon be time to hold them to their word.

"Once we are ready, we will be asking them for money, which they have and we don't," he said. "It's time to get moving, and we are. We just have to keep focused and see this through."

The new plan also has the potential to help settle two lawsuits that were launched against the city by companies chosen to design, construct, provide cars for and operate the line before it was cancelled.

## **TTC puts up cash for light-rail lines**

(Posted Date: Monday, December 3, 2007)

**\$13 million to start work on routes including Sheppard line**  
By Claudia Cautillo

The Toronto Transit Commission's plan to build light-rail transit lines throughout the city, including in North York, is one step closer to becoming a reality.

At a recent meeting, the TTC voted to put \$13 million of its capital budget towards starting work on three projected light-rail lines — running along Sheppard Ave. east, Etobicoke-Finch Ave. West, and the entire stretch of Eglinton Ave. from Kennedy Rd. to Pearson International Airport.

In total, there are seven planned transit lines for the city — including one that would run along Don Mills Rd. — proposed last March as part of the TTC's Toronto Transit City project.

The LRT lines are intended to link the city, and provide access in an efficient and environmentally friendly way.

TTC chair Adam Giambrone says the money allotted by the commission is intended to get the project on its feet in its infancy.

"We had to make that commitment to go forward, to make sure we could get the (preliminary) work done on the lines in preparation to start construction in 2009," he said in a Nov. 22 phone interview.

But the TTC can only go so far without funding from the province, he added.

"Construction cannot begin until the bigger amounts are transferred," Giambrone said. "So we can begin the work



on the design and not slow down one bit, but ultimately, before the shovel goes in the ground in 2009, there's going to have to be the money available."

That money needs to come from Queen's Park, and Giambrone says he is confident that it will, since the provincial government has said it will come through with necessary funding for the Transit City project.

He anticipates that funding will be included as part of the province's Move Ontario 2020 plan, a multi-billion dollar project announced this summer to finance 52 rapid transit projects throughout the GTA.

"There are enough assurances from the provincial government that they can make those commitments in the budget," Giambrone said. "The province has said they will fund this, so the TTC has agreed to put it into their budget.

Funding is to be announced in the spring of 2008, as part of the provincial budget.

The Etobicoke-Finch West line would run 18 kilometres long and link Etobicoke with Finch Station. It would boost ridership along the corridor to 23.6 million a year by 2021, up from the estimated 11.3 million now.

Along the projected 14-kilometre Sheppard line that would link Don Mills Station to Scarborough, ridership would jump from 10 million now to 16.5 million by 2021.

And the 18-kilometre long Don Mills line would run along Don Mills Rd., from Steeles Ave. to the Don Valley Parkway, then south to connect with the Bloor-Danforth subway line. It would see ridership rise from 13.7 million to 21.2 million by 2021.

But not everyone is jumping on the LRT bandwagon.

York Centre councillor Mike Feldman says he's concerned that residents won't be able to get to the light-rail stops quickly enough from their homes, making them more likely to opt for their cars rather than using public transit.

"If you haven't got a bus getting them from the centre core out to the light rail, than I don't see that it's going to be a boom," he said.

Willowdale councillor David Shiner echoed Feldman's thoughts, saying the light rail plan will demand a great deal of electricity.

"We don't have enough electricity in the city of Toronto now to maintain our infrastructure and keep the air conditioning running in the summer time," Shiner said. "How are we going to run train lines?"

Shiner says traffic will also be a problem, since the number of car lanes will be reduced.

He suggested investing in an extended subway system and dedicated bus routes instead of light-rail transit lines.

Unfazed, Giambrone remains confident that the Transit City Plan will make Toronto a leader of public transportation in North America.

"We took the position that no one in Toronto should be disadvantaged by not owning a car," he said. "The Transit City Plan is going to revolutionize how people get around Toronto."

Giambrone anticipates that construction on the lines will begin in the spring of 2009, and be completed and fully operational by 2012.

## **Those waiting to catch a streetcar in rush hour on Queen know well the hell of waiting 40 minutes in the cold.**

About 90 riders showed up on Tuesday night, December 4, at Metro Hall to give TTC staff hell right back at a brainstorming session on how to improve service on the 501.

The worst-served route in the core? There's no doubt about that in transit advocate Steve Munro's mind. Just look at the numbers. Ridership has dropped almost 50 per cent on the route in the last 20 years, compared to less than 10 per cent on other lines across the system.

Queen cars used to carry 70,000 passengers per day. Unreliability – streetcars are anywhere between 15 to 40 minutes off schedule in rush hour – and a cutback to service have sent some 30,000 passengers looking for other transportation alternatives.

"How do you take a route and screw it up so bad?" asks Munro.

TTC service planning manager Mitch Stambler blames the city and the police.

He says the transportation department denied the commission signal priority at traffic lights and that it still allows cars to turn left, blocking streetcars in the lane. Meanwhile, police don't enforce traffic laws.

But James Bow of Transit Toronto says the problems on Queen started when the TTC decided to start using articulated light rail vehicles (ALRVs), those extra-long streetcars, at nine-minute intervals, instead of regular cars every six minutes.

"As a result, we have crowded vehicles; we have large gaps in service and riders left stranded at stops."



Munro suggests splitting the Queen route into two overlapping service routes to reduce wait times and bunching of streetcars.

Sierra Club of Ontario's transit campaigner, Mike Oliver, wonders why streetcar routes were largely ignored in the TTC's recent Ridership Growth Strategy.

"Toronto is planning for 1 million additional residents by 2020. Intensification along Queen will not happen with the current 501 service," says Oliver.

TTC chair Adam Giambrone says the TTC's not "ignoring" service in the core – even though "a lot of what's being built under Transit City is out in the inner suburbs."

But he says restricting parking and banning left-hand turns on Queen, both actions the city's contemplating, should speed up service.

We can't wait to see.

## **TTC vows to look into 501 streetcar problems on Queen**

BY DAVID NICKLE  
DECEMBER 12, 2007 03:30 PM

The slow-running, short-turning Queen 501 streetcar, long the bane of Beach commuters, could be getting a boost next year as Toronto Transit Commission officials take a serious look at the route's shortcomings.

Gary Webster, the TTC chief general manager, told commissioners they'll have a report in January that will outline a range of measures designed to keep the busy streetcar line on schedule.

"The challenge is to go away and say, we haven't been successful to our standards or to the customers - what do we do to run a better service?" said Webster at the Dec. 6 meeting of the TTC, just two days after the commission had met with commuters and residents, mostly from the east end, to hear a litany of complaints about service problems on the line.

One of those, Beach resident Renee Knight, reiterated those complaints to commissioners, bringing with her a 300-name petition demanding better and more consistent service, particularly east of Kingston Road. She complained of waits of between 20 and 40 minutes for streetcars, only to find that they've been short-turned. Knight, a personal trainer, said she is unable to get to clients reliably using the service.

"We all need a reliable service to get us where we need to go," she said. "There is really no nice way to put this - it's sheer negligence to the community. ... I have talked with people from all walks of life who live and work in the Beach and I have had people who had to sell their house because they bought it thinking they could get downtown. This is ruining the neighbourhood."



Photo by Michael Tricarid – nycsubway.org

Webster told the committee that the Queen route, the longest streetcar route in the city, is beset with problems. Traffic volume in the downtown core is exacerbated by the fact that there are no left turn restrictions in place along the rest of the route, meaning that the streetcars are frequently delayed.

The commission will be looking at a report in January that will look at various options, including improving the timing of traffic signals to give streetcars priority and left-turn restrictions along the entire route.

As well, the commission could consider splitting the route in two, so there's an east-end route and a west-end route overlapping in the downtown core.

## **FTA tells Metro to rework its rail plans**

By MIKE SNYDER Copyright 2007 Houston Chronicle

Dec. 5, 2007, 12:34AM

An unexpected demand for additional justification for two planned Houston light rail lines raises doubts about Metro's relationship with a federal agency it is counting



on for funding, Metro President Frank Wilson said Tuesday.

A letter from Sherry Little, deputy administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, withdraws that agency's approval of preliminary engineering studies and other elements of rail lines planned for the North and Southeast corridors.

The letter, which Wilson said arrived Friday, said Metro must do additional environmental studies, including public hearings, before it can acquire land and start construction. It said Metro's October decision to build light rail in all five of its transit corridors, rather than bus rapid transit that could be converted to rail in four of them, requires the extra information and review.

Wilson said Metro already had provided almost all of the requested information and can quickly generate the rest. He said, however, that the letter's content and tone suggest that the healthy working relationship the two agencies have enjoyed may be deteriorating.

"There is a very hard edge to this letter," Wilson said. "They're acting as if light rail transit is a whole different planet" from bus rapid transit, when "the only real difference is the vehicle."

Metro plans to start work in the spring and have all five lines completed by 2012. Wilson said he believes that schedule is still feasible.

Metro is seeking federal funds to cover half the costs of the Southeast, North and University lines, but plans to pay for the Uptown and East End lines with local funds.

Wilson said the transit administration previously "gave us every indication that what we were talking about was great." He suggested that something other than procedural or technical considerations may be in play.

"I don't know what's behind the letter," Wilson said. "I don't know the motivation."

An FTA spokesman said the agency would have no comment.

Wilson said he was particularly perplexed by a sentence in Little's letter stating that Metro must demonstrate its technical capacity to build and operate a light rail line.

"Just look out my window," he said, nodding toward the Main Street rail line that his office overlooks. Wilson said the Main Street line, which opened in 2004, carries 45,000 riders daily, a volume it was not projected to reach until 2030.

The 2003 referendum approving extensions to the Main Street line called for building rail in all five corridors. Two years later, however, residents and elected officials along the planned North, East End, Southeast and Uptown routes were dismayed to learn that Metro analysis showed the cost would be too high and ridership too low to justify federal funding for rail.

Instead, Metro said that BRT — buses that look like trains, running in a guideway — would be used initially on these four lines. Rails would be buried under the concrete for future conversion when ridership increased enough to justify the added expense, they said.

In October the agency reversed course again, saying new federal rules made it possible to build light rail immediately in all five corridors.

Little's letter to Wilson said Metro may not acquire any additional property for the North or Southeast lines until a new environmental assessment has been completed and approved. Any acquisition begun prior to the letter, it says, may continue if the FTA's regional office agrees in writing that halting it would cause a hardship to the owner or tenant.

Wilson said Metro has offers outstanding for 65 to 70 properties in the two corridors and expects no difficulty getting FTA approval for those purchases.

Christof Spieler, an engineer who writes a transportation blog for the Citizens' Transportation Coalition, an advocacy group that supports rail, said the letter might cause a delay but does not appear devastating to Metro's plans.

"This sounds like the kind of thing that's to be expected when an agency makes a massive change relatively late in the process," Spieler said, referring to Metro's decision to build light rail in all five corridors.

U.S. Reps. Gene Green and Sheila Jackson Lee, Houston Democrats who have supported Metro's plans, said they would try to help resolve the issues cited in Little's letter.

Rep. John Culberson, R-Houston, who has been a persistent critic of Metro's plans, could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

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## Fledgling bus line taps demand

December 9, 2007

By Teresa Auch Post-Tribune staff writer



VALPARAISO -- Mayor Jon Costas was visiting the Valparaiso University campus the other weekend when he noticed something -- the students were filling up the city buses.

The scene provided another example that the research showing demand for the bus system, just a few months old, should be taken seriously.

The city has taken that desire for public transportation and turned it into not just the bus system but a shuttle service to the South Shore line on the weekends and soon into a shuttle service to downtown Chicago.

"We just sensed there was a need for it," Costas said.

But while Valparaiso has been doing, other groups trying to put together a bus system for all of Northwest Indiana remain in the planning stage.

#### Planning, details

Valparaiso first started looking at creating a citywide bus system about 31½ years ago. It used that time to research the market for one and plan out all the details, such as where stops would be and how it would be funded.

Then when plans began to form for a South Shore extension to the city, Costas said, officials wanted to allay the need until the extension was made by providing shuttles to the South Shore and downtown Chicago.

The city has now begun running shuttles to the Dune Park Station every weekend, and the route is so full, mainly with university students, reservations have to be made.

"The city bus service has proved to be quite valuable for Valparaiso University students, which is great because we needed their support," Costas said.

The only reason the third component of the city's plan, shuttles to Chicago, isn't running yet is because new buses had to be ordered, which will take about one year.

Part of the reason for the city's quick turnaround is that everyone worked together, said Chuck Williams, a Valparaiso City Council member and a main force behind the bus system.

"We just set out to get it done," he said. "We didn't really care who got the credit."

The city also benefited from having government officials who are still immersed in the private sector, he said. The private sector generally moves faster than government does and those people came with that culture in mind.

"I think there's just a sense of urgency to get things done that may or may not exist in other places," Williams said.

When it came time to apply for funds, the city's history of getting things done helped convince organizations to invest money, Costas said.

#### RBA didn't do study first

While Valparaiso has worked on its own public transportation, the Regional Development Authority and Regional Bus Authority have been planning a system for all of Northwest Indiana.

The idea is to create one bus system for everyone that would have access to the region as well as Chicago. It would allow someone in East Chicago, for instance, to go to Merrillville.

The system would replace the current city bus systems of Gary, Hammond and East Chicago, which serve just their respective cities.

Part of the hold-up is that the RBA, which would operate the system, has not conducted its study yet, unlike Valparaiso, RDA Director Tim Sanders said.

"When they came to us, they said we want money for buses but we don't know where the money is going to come from," Sanders said, adding that the RBA was instructed to complete a study.

But another problem goes more deeply. The RBA has to get the cities of Lake County, including the ones that already have a bus system, to agree to participate. That is turning into no easy task.

"I think you've got some mayors who very much want to keep their bus systems the way it is and under their wing," Sanders said. "Other mayors are much more receptive to the idea."

But Sanders maintains that is not a major roadblock to the problem and is something he's willing to be patient with.

U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Merrillville, who has been a major supporter of a regionwide system, says the resistance isn't surprising or something related to just Lake County.

"People talk about wanting change and when confronted with it, they resist it," he said.

Can't compare the pair

RDA officials say they're not concerned about where they stand. Board member Lou Martinez said he wasn't surprised Valparaiso was further along than the RBA because they had already conducted the study.

"Valparaiso is just very, very aggressive," he said.

As for why the RBA is behind in the study, Martinez said the organization just received funding from the RDA six to seven months ago.

Visclosky said it's hard to compare the RBA and Valparaiso because so much more comes into play with the RBA.

Because the RBA is dealing with various cities and groups, such as NIRPC, which handles the federal funds for buses, they have more to deal with than Valparaiso, Visclosky said.

But Valparaiso also had to balance the opinions of various groups, Williams said, albeit fewer ones than the RBA. A big difference was that everyone had the same goal.

"In Valparaiso, if you have a City Council, a Redevelopment Commission and a mayor who all buy into something, you don't have competing forces," he said. "The RBA is trying to balance interests of three separate cities."

Both Visclosky and Sanders said they did not believe too many groups had a say in the regional bus system. Each one has its purpose, Sanders said.



But they do come with their own processes, such as NIRPC and the federal funding it handles, to go through.

"We're going to be patient about this," Sanders said.

In Valparaiso, though, the mentality is different, Costas said. Officials have cultivated a fast-paced environment, one he credited for the completion of city projects, including the bus system.

"We have a culture of getting things done in the city," he said. "Life is too short to just talk about things."

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## Passenger train deal falls apart

Burlington Free Press December 7, 2007

**MONTPELIER** -- The Vermont Agency of Transportation, after collaboration with both the Vermont Attorney General and the State Treasurer, decided not to contract with a Colorado company to purchase \$17.5 million worth of new passenger train cars. The agency made the announcement in a news release.



VTrans approached the Legislature in 2006 about purchasing five new rail cars — three engine cars and two passenger cars — as a way to potentially lower costs because the new train sets would be less expensive to run than the decades old cars now used, and owned, by Amtrak on the Vermonter line that runs from St. Albans to Springfield, Massachusetts and eventually New York City and Washington D.C.



The Vermont Legislature in 2007 approved the purchase. Among the conditions was a requirement that the manufacturer, Colorado Railcar Manufacturing, agree to either buy back the cars or resell them at 90 percent of the purchase price after three years if the state determined the project to be unsuccessful.

The purchase was also contingent on the State

Treasurer and Attorney General's approval of the deal's financial guarantees.

"An investment of \$17.5 million is substantial, and everyone had to be comfortable that the state's investment would be protected," said VTrans Secretary Neale Lunderville. "Unfortunately, neither the manufacturer nor Amtrak were able to supply us with enough guarantee that the state would recoup 90 percent of its investment should things not work out."

After months of negotiations which also included Amtrak, the sides were unable to forge an agreement that assured that Vermont was able to return the rail cars to either the manufacturer or Amtrak if the demonstration was unsuccessful.

Existing passenger rail service will continue with Amtrak-owned cars. VTrans will continue to work with the Legislature to pursue improvements to both the availability and affordability of public transportation.

"We continue to believe that this type of equipment is the future of passenger rail," Lunderville said. "We believe that such equipment will be more affordable, have a smaller environmental impact and allow improvements to Vermont's passenger service."

## City Hall axes bus rapid transit

**Concept in works since 2004 abandoned in favour of more LRT**

**Gordon Kent, The Edmonton Journal**

Published: Thursday, December 13

**EDMONTON** - After more than three years of study, Edmonton's transportation department is dropping plans to lure commuters out of their cars by introducing a bus rapid-transit system.

A 2004 report talked about running a new generation of jumbo buses along exclusive lanes or with the right of way over other traffic between heated, well-lit stations up to 1.6 kilometres apart.

Councillors gave preliminary approval last July to a BRT route from Lewis Estates in the west end to downtown, which could have involved demolishing up to 15 houses and seven businesses on Stony Plain Road between 142nd and 149th streets.

But transportation general manager Bob Boutilier said in a Nov. 29 letter to civic officials and politicians that he has decided to remove city material that mentions "bus rapid transit," including the website devoted to the topic.

The phrase is causing "significant confusion" among councillors and members of the public, affecting the department's work and reviews of development



proposals, particularly in mature neighbourhoods, his letter said.

In an interview Wednesday, Boutilier called the term "jargon" that made many people think only of an expensive, dedicated high-tech system in its own lane.

Instead, he wants to focus on expanding the LRT system, which he said is more efficient and moves passengers faster. A report on a future growth plan is due early next year.

Service on individual bus routes can still be enhanced where appropriate by adding transit-priority traffic signals, express lanes, automated tickets or other options associated with BRT, Boutilier said.

"I don't see anything changing in terms of what we're trying to do, which is move people quicker. What we do is get away from this thought that BRT is always a precursor to LRT."

Staff will continue developing transit priority corridors to deal with congestion, but the program will only purchase isolated properties when needed, meaning the city is no longer looking to buy land along Stony Plain Road.

"To gain a couple of minutes on a route by expropriating property or tearing down someone's house doesn't make sense," Boutilier said.

Officials indicated at a meeting on high-speed transit this week that they'll consider introducing a "super express" bus with limited stops from the west end to downtown, said Bill Eadie, chairman of the Glenora Community League planning and development committee.

Local residents are happy Stony Plain Road isn't being widened for a bus-only lane, he said.

"If you can achieve the same result at less cost and less disruption to the landowner, it's a win-win situation."

Coun. Linda Sloan likes Boutilier's idea, saying the city had lost some focus on future LRT growth by putting time into BRT proposals instead.

"Expending time and resources on building a completely new mode of transportation in the city, I didn't feel was the most prudent approach."

Coun. Kim Krushell said it should be cheaper to build and operate a single LRT line to the west end than the downtown BRT and a second possible route over the Quesnell Bridge to the south side.

"The cash involved with the BRT is so prohibitively high ... that I think it makes far more sense to place that cash into LRT extension and don't have BRTs."

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## To tune of "Love Train," streetcar goes on a roll

By Mike Lindblom Seattle Times transportation reporter

Curious riders filled the new South Lake Union streetcars Wednesday, starting what politicians hope will become a streetcar network.

After some opening speeches, the orange train left downtown at 12:15 p.m. with Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels and dignitaries aboard. The O'Jays hit "Love Train" played over the speakers.



The South Lake Union streetcar makes an opening statement on its debut in downtown Seattle. This car headed toward Pacific Place on Wednesday afternoon.



Then, the public crammed the purple and red trains to their 140-passenger capacity. By late afternoon, many trains still carried 100 people or more, said Pat Daniels, an operations supervisor for King County Metro Transit. He said the trains ran flawlessly.

"It was nice and quiet and very soft, with no bumps," said Denise Antoine, a nanny who brought 18-month-old Carter and Quentin Chamberlain, of Seattle, for a ride.

The only mishap was at 5 p.m., when a train was jolted by a ball bearing, a bit bigger than a golf ball that was found wedged in the track along Terry Avenue North. Police located a few more, and the train was delayed 10 minutes, Daniels said.

Generally, the streetcar — which runs from the Westin Hotel to the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center — is faster than walking, slower than a bicycle.

A tax on nearby properties covers about half of the \$52.1 million cost; the rest is funded by federal and state grants, plus income from sales of city land nearby. Cost overruns added \$1.6 million to the \$50.5 million estimate, since construction began in July 2006.

John Fox, head of the Seattle Displacement Coalition, said the city's investment amounts to a "frill" to benefit Paul Allen's development company, Vulcan.

Officials at the opening ceremony, attended by about 600 people, portrayed the line as a small measure to resist global warming.

"This isn't just about a 1.3-mile line; this is about how we're going to build cities in the future, and how people are going to live in proximity to work, and not rely on the internal combustion engine," Nickels said.

Patricia Lenssen held a "Watch for Injured Cyclists" sign at the opening ceremony. Lenssen said she broke her jaw and two front teeth May 29, when her bike wheel became caught in a rail groove.

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## Rocket (and Subway) Science

Metro Hopes Upgrade Will Make for a Smarter SmarTrip Card

By Lena H. Sun

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sunday, December 9, 2007; C01

Metro's electronic SmarTrip cards are no geniuses, but the agency hopes to make them Mensa ready over the next year. New technology will allow the cards to compute all fares and special passes that Metro and most of its regional bus partners offer, and make it far easier to add money for trips.

As it stands, SmarTrip cards can't do too much: Riders can use them to pay for a single bus or subway ride and to park at Metro lots, most of which do not accept any other form of payment.

The cards cannot factor an array of special passes — such as Metrorail's 7-Day Fast Pass, Montgomery County's Ride-About and Alexandria's DASH Pass — that many riders use to save money. So riders who park and use special passes must carry SmarTrip cards and old-fashioned paper cards. It costs Metro about \$500,000 a year for paper fare cards.

Technology upgrades will enable the electronic cards to calculate special passes, allowing riders to ditch their paper cards and saving the agency money.

To put money on the cards, riders must now use machines in subway stations or on buses. Each trip deducts from their total, like a debit card.

The new technology will enable riders to automatically add money to SmarTrip cards the same way drivers do with the popular E-ZPass electronic toll payment system. Riders will be able to link SmarTrip to their credit cards, which will automatically add money when their balance dips below a designated level.

Officials with Cubic Transportation Systems, which has an \$11.6 million contract to upgrade the electronic chip and related hardware and software on SmarTrip, said the new technology will be in place and glitch-free by late next year.

At the same time, Metro is trying to make it easier for riders to buy the cards by selling them at more locations. Until recently, the cards were sold primarily online, at Metro sales offices, commuter stores and vending machines at Metrorail stations with parking. Only a handful of grocery stores sold them.



Last month, Metro announced that more Giant stores will sell the card. And by the middle of next year, Metro hopes that a few hundred neighborhood retailers, including convenience stores, will sell the cards and have devices to let customers add money to them, according to Greg Garback, Metro's SmarTrip manager.

"We want to have as broad a distribution as possible," he said.

Riders have long clamored for a more convenient and versatile card, but over the years, efforts to revamp the cards have run into numerous delays. Paul Orloff, Cubic's eastern region marketing director, said it has taken a long time to make the necessary changes because the card needed to be compatible with many regional bus systems.

"It adds another level of complexity," he said. But, he said, Cubic is "on track" to complete the latest upgrades on time.

The technology changes include reformatting the chip inside cards with a new operating system and replacing outdated fare collection equipment, including more than 1,700 SmarTrip readers on fare gates. Riders will not need to buy new cards to use the new technology; their cards will automatically be updated the first time they use them.

The changes come as the blue-and-green plastic card assumes a central role in how people use transit in the Washington region. Eight of 10 regional bus systems accept SmarTrip cards, and the remaining two, PRTC OmniRide and Prince George's County's TheBus, are expected to have that capability next year, Metro officials said.

Also, under a fare proposal that the Metro board plans to consider next week, only riders using cash would have to pay a proposed dime increase in the cost of a bus ride. There would be no increase for SmarTrip users.

Like other transit systems, Metro is trying to shift from cash and paper to electronic fare cards to save money, reduce fraud, speed bus boarding and make transit more user-friendly.

"When you get in your car, you don't feed dollar bills into it, so it doesn't feel like it is costing you dollars," said Maryland board member Peter Benjamin, a former Metro

executive who was one of the chief architects of SmarTrip. "When you go on transit, you've got to feed money into devices -- a device is always taking your dollars," he said. "So we've created a psychological barrier that says, 'You gotta pay us.' "

But if customers don't have to think about how much their ride costs, then transit becomes more like a car "and the more people want to ride," he said.

Metro has issued about 2.5 million SmarTrip cards since they were introduced in 1999. About 1.5 million cards are in active use, with about 50,000 cards sold monthly. On Metrorail, about 60 to 65 percent of riders tap their cards to the target on the fare gate to enter and exit stations. On Metrobus, about 22 percent of riders pay with cards.

On some Express bus routes, such as the popular 11Y from Mount Vernon to Farragut Square, almost all riders use SmarTrip, said Garback, who also rides that route.

After regional buses started accepting the card this year, use soared on some commuter routes. On the Loudoun County Commuter Bus, about 96 percent of riders pay their fares with SmarTrip, Garback said.

By the end of next year, Metro predicts, almost 70 percent of rail riders and 40 percent of bus riders will be using the card. To increase use, Metro and area governments plan to launch a marketing campaign early next year.

"We will be promoting it very aggressively because we want to get it into more people's hands," said Howard Benn, chief of customer and operations support for Montgomery's RideOn bus. "The whole object is one card, many rides."

## **The Mass Transit System from Hell**

Friday, Dec. 14, 2007 By GIDEON LONG

Amid the apartment blocks and flyovers of the Chilean capital, Monica Eyzaguirre joins the snaking line of people at a bus stop, unfolds her newspaper and prepares for a long, long wait. "I hate Transantiago with every bone in my body," she says of the city's widely despised new transit system, watching a bus heaving with passengers trundle towards her down a congested road. "I used to take one bus to work and now I have to



take three. It's made the lives of millions of people more difficult and more miserable."

Eyzaguirre's complaint is common among Santiago residents these days — ever since the government launched the new transit system in February, commuters have found their daily journeys to work disrupted, their metro trains overcrowded and their roads clogged with traffic.

The government had planned to modify the system but, nearly a year on; it has only succeeded in botching the job. One transport minister has been sacked and another is picking up the pieces, as the transit system is losing over \$1 million a day. Transantiago — possibly the most hated word in the Chilean lexicon — is a classic case of a good idea wrecked in the implementation.

There was no question the city's old transport system needed changing. It was deregulated, chaotic, dirty and sometimes dangerous. Drivers were forced to compete for fares, overtaking one another at breakneck speeds to reach passengers first. Buses were old and belched black fumes. So, the government decided to replace the old bus routes with new ones linked to the metro network in a system that has eliminated cash and works entirely by swipe cards. The battered old yellow buses have been replaced by smart new high-tech fleet.

The problem is that there are simply not enough new buses to meet demand — 8,000 old ones were replaced by around 5,500 of the new ones — which has meant long lines, overcrowding and frayed tempers.

The launch of the new routes was poorly publicized, leaving passengers confused. The government opted for a "big bang" approach: Six million Santiaguinos took their last bus ride home on February 9 in one transport

system, and then were expected to find their way to work and school on February 10 in an entirely new one. Wisdom of hindsight suggests incremental changes may have been less traumatic.

Meanwhile, the metro, the jewel in Transantiago's crown, is creaking under the strain of twice as many passengers as before. "We used to be proud of our metro," says student Andres Carrera as he shuffles on to a crowded platform. "Now we just make jokes about it."

The problem is exacerbated by the city's fragmented government structure. Santiago has over 30 mayors, one for each of its districts. With no single executive office in charge of the city as a whole, the job of implementing Transantiago has fallen to the national government. Imagine President George W. Bush getting bogged down in rewiring the New York City mass transit system, and you get the idea.

"Transantiago has got very severe problems," says Juan Carlos Munoz, professor of transport engineering and logistics at Santiago's Pontifical Catholic University. "It's got better since it was launched but only very slowly. The main problems are still unresolved."

Munoz blames Transantiago's woes on a lack of infrastructure (there are very few bus lanes, for example), inadequate information, and the government's steadfast refusal to subsidize the project from the outset. Still, with so much anger on the streets, the government simply cannot afford to hike fares to meet the shortfall, even though the system is losing money. Instead, it keeps asking parliament to approve additional funding. In June, Congress agreed a cash injection of \$290 million, but last month refused to approve further funds. The problems afflicting Transantiago have, meanwhile, created a vicious circle. Fed up with poor public transport, people use private cars to get to work. That



blocks roads, which delays buses, which makes the transport system worse, and prompts even more commuters to travel by car. Car sales have jumped in recent months, while bicycle shops and scooter outlets are enjoying a roaring trade.

One group of commuters has even launched a class action suit against the government, blaming it for worsening their lives. The suit is unlikely to succeed, but it's a signal of popular discontent. In fact, Transantiago has pounded the approval ratings of President Michelle Bachelet. According to pollsters Adimark GFK, the Socialist Party president's rating slumped to 38.2% in November from over 60% in April 2006. Unsurprisingly, that fall has been sharpest in the capital.

Bachelet has not hesitated to eat humble pie over Transantiago. She has apologized publicly and, at a recent breakfast with foreign correspondents, said the system's failures caused her "deep pain." The debacle is a particular embarrassment to Chile, which prides itself on being an oasis of order in an often chaotic continent. A parliamentary commission is investigating what went wrong with Transantiago, and its report is not expected to make happy reading. But Santiaguinos will have plenty of time to read it, while waiting on line for buses.

## **Port Authority plans automated fare system**

**By Jim Ritchie**  
**TRIBUNE-REVIEW**  
*Saturday, December 15, 2007*

Port Authority of Allegheny County has found a use for \$35 million left over from the construction of the West Busway seven years ago.

Shifting the unspent federal money will help Port Authority install an automated fare collection system known as smart card.

"When we get the smart cards, it's going to give us much more accurate ridership counts, and it's going to give us ridership trends," said authority spokesman Bob Grove.

"We're going to be able to see exactly how people are using it, when people use it and where they're going."

The system provides riders who buy transit passes with a card, similar to a debit card, which they would swipe across an electronic reader as they board or exit buses and T light rail cars. The reader automatically would deduct the fare from the rider's account.

The reader can collect rider data that would allow the agency to see where riders board and where they exit. By tracking the data, the agency could tailor the system to meet the specific travel habits of its riders. It could expose deficiencies in its routes.

Port Authority estimates the smart card project will cost between \$25 million and \$30 million. The remaining money would be spent on other bus improvements.

The Federal Transit Administration said the money shift is allowed.

"They can use that money for buses and bus-related equipment under a provision of the appropriations act for fiscal year 2005," said Paul Griffo, an agency spokesman. Congress gave Port Authority permission to shift the money in the appropriations act.

The Federal Transit Administration initially approved \$326.8 million for Port Authority to build the West Busway and Wabash Tunnel HOV project.

The project at first was intended to create an 8-mile, bus-only road heading toward Pittsburgh International Airport serving a projected 50,000 riders daily. It included rehabilitating the then-unused Wabash Tunnel and building a new Monongahela River bridge to Downtown.

When bids came in too high, the authority scaled back the work. It built a 5-mile busway through Carnegie, Crafton, East Carnegie, Ingram and Sheraden that now serves 10,000 riders daily. It opened in 2000.

The tunnel was rehabilitated and is open to high-occupancy vehicle use. The bridge plan was scrapped.

Smart card systems are popping up across the country and in use by riders in Washington, Chicago and Boston.

The cards make buying passes easier. Now, riders must buy weekly, monthly or annual passes at local stores or the authority's Downtown service center.

"It's a rechargeable card," Grove said. "A customer who has a smart card would have the ability from a home computer to add more money to it."

Implementing smart cards is expected to take two to three years.

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