



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

## **MARCH 2008**

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.

### **• MARCH MEETING**

The **March meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on March 7, 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, "**Past Motor Bus Society Conventions**," will be a slide presentation by John LeBeau.

The hospital is on California near Foster. Winona is one half-block south of Foster. By public transportation, take the 92 Foster to California. From the Ravenswood Brown Line, take the 93 North California from Kimball, get off after it turns onto California from Foster and walk back south. Or, take the 11 Lincoln from Western; get off at Carmen (One block south of Foster) and walk west on Winona.

There is some parking on California and Winona. The parking structure is on the west side of California just south of Foster.

### **Lawmakers pass mass-transit bill 3 days before drastic cuts, fare raises**

By Monique Garcia, Jeffrey Meitrodt, Richard Wronski and Gary Washburn

Tribune reporters

**SPRINGFIELD-** State lawmakers Thursday approved Gov. Rod Blagojevich's plan to give free bus and train rides to seniors as part of a \$530 million tax increase package that prevents major service cuts and some fare increases for Chicago-area public transit riders.

Transit officials hailed the measure as a long-sought political compromise that stops the clock just three days from threatened "doomsday" service cuts. But they

**\$5.00**

cautioned that elderly riders should not expect immediate free rides under the plan, because transit leaders have two months to implement that.

The Illinois Senate signed off on the governor's changes by a 32-19 tally—two more votes than the measure got last week—but only after many of them expressed dissatisfaction with the last-minute nature of Blagojevich's changes.

Sen. Martin Sandoval (D-Chicago) said there is no free ride for seniors because they now will be paying more in sales tax and, if they sell their homes in Chicago, potentially a real estate transfer tax. Both tax increases are part of the legislation.

"Houdini would wrap himself in chains . . . and find his way out after much suspense. There's a better act," Sandoval said. "Rodini is a better escape artist than anyone I've ever seen in my life."

Mayor Richard Daley, however, refused to criticize Blagojevich.

"The governor saw fit to do this, and you can't debate that," he said.

Calling it a "happy day" for riders, Daley said he now will work with members of the City Council to pass an increase in Chicago's real estate transfer tax by \$3 per \$1,000 of sales price, action that is called for in the legislation to help fund CTA pension and health care costs. It has not been decided yet whether the increase will apply to buyers or sellers, he said.

Legislators passed the funding plan last week, but instead of signing it, Blagojevich amended the bill to include free rides for seniors as he sought to deflect the political damage of breaking his long-held pledge not to raise taxes.

"What this is all about is an opportunity and an effort by the governor to change the subject," said Sen. Matt Murphy (R-Palatine). "With his efforts on this bill, he broke that promise and signed on to sales taxes. Seniors, the ones I've heard from anyway, don't want a free ride."

Senate President Emil Jones (D-Chicago), 72, noted his own "conflict" on the issue: it would give him free rides.

"When you get to be a senior, a lot of benefits come your way," said Jones, who urged the Senate to approve Blagojevich's changes.

In an attempt to win more support for the transit funding, supporters offered a follow-up bill that would extend free rides to disabled people while setting income eligibility requirements that would limit how many seniors get to ride for free. The House quickly approved the measure by an 86-22 vote, but Jones indicated he would not bring it up for an immediate vote.

Earlier Thursday, the House accepted the governor's amendatory veto on a 61-47 vote, after many lawmakers accused Blagojevich of jeopardizing the plan by making a last-minute change that required another trip through the legislature.

"I'm going to support this so as not to make transit riders innocent victims of the governor's gamesmanship," said Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago). "Shame on the governor for putting us in this position, shame on him for playing politics with people's lives."

Transit officials and CTA union leaders watching in the packed House gallery rose to their feet in jubilation when the House vote was tallied.

"People can have strong differences with what the governor did, but we've come hopefully to the end of a three-year struggle on our part to get the reforms that are needed, the pension changes that are needed and the funding that we need to carry us through for a decade or more," said RTA Chairman Jim Reilly. "So that's a great day."

If the bill had not passed, Chicago Transit Authority, Metra and Pace riders would have faced an unprecedented level of fare hikes and service cuts, including the elimination of more than 160 city and suburban bus routes. All evening suburban bus service and many weekend Pace routes would have been eliminated. CTA fares would have jumped as high as \$3.25. Pace bus fares would have increased to \$2, and all paratransit, dial-a-ride, taxi-access and vanpool rides would have cost more.

About 2,400 CTA employees and 200 Pace drivers and administrative workers would have been laid off.

Metra envisioned 10 percent fare hikes each year for the next three years. Even when the legislature gave its approval to the funding package last week, the commuter rail line decided to keep a 10 percent fare hike set for Feb. 1, saying it was "prudent" in light of economic pressures and necessary to offset four years of diverting about \$168 million in capital funds to operating expenses.

Metra's decision to raise fares even though lawmakers approved the transit funding measure last week drew the

ire of Sen. Terry Link (D-Waukegan), who urged Metra to reconsider Thursday.

"They knew if they had said before the vote that they were going to raise it 10 percent, the vote may have come out in a different way, and they didn't want to risk that," Link said. "What this General Assembly giveth, this General Assembly can taketh back."

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## **CTA says cameras in new trains will help with response to emergencies**

By Jon Hilkevitch | Tribune transportation reporter  
8:21 PM CST, January 23, 2008



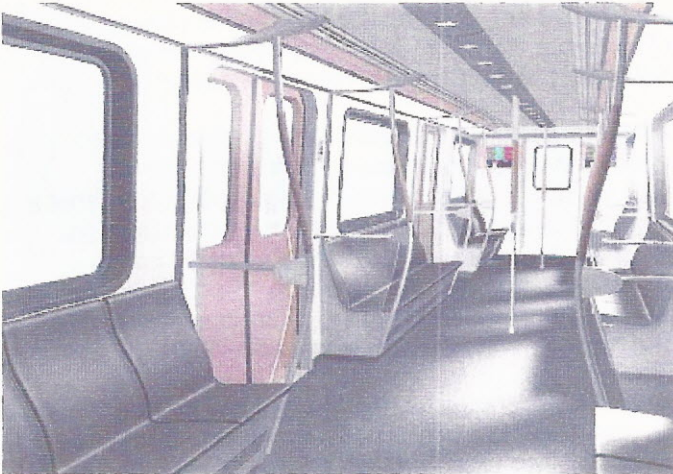
CTA train operators and police officers will be able to tap into live videos shot from inside new rail cars to respond to crime or other emergencies, transit officials said Wednesday.



The security cameras are among almost \$27 million in upgrades approved Wednesday by the Chicago Transit Authority Board for 406 rail cars scheduled for delivery beginning in 2010. About \$577 million already had been earmarked for the purchase.

The new rail cars will also feature seats with an anti-

stain fabric less likely to absorb odors; flat-screen TV monitors that give the train's location on the route, the next station and travel time estimates; more seats facing the aisles; and a new traction system to provide faster and smoother rides, officials said.



Onboard technology also will diagnose mechanical problems on trains, reducing maintenance costs so sharply, CTA President Ron Huberman predicted the savings would cover the \$26.6 million cost of the upgrades in just five years.



"We won't be tearing up a train to find out what's wrong," he said. A passenger could activate the security system's real-time video feed by pressing a "panic" button on the new rail cars.

The video can be monitored by the train operator, CTA command center and mass-transit police, enabling officers or paramedics to rush to the next station on the line to respond to a crime or other emergencies. CTA officials said they believe cameras already installed on buses and other security measures have deterred crime on the system over the years.

CTA officials also said they are unconcerned about vandalism directed at the security cameras on the new rail cars because it hasn't been an issue on buses. For

one thing, the cameras would record the vandal in the act, officials said.



Last year, there were 411 serious crimes reported on CTA buses, down from 569 in 1999, the year the agency started installing surveillance cameras.



CTA officials also said they are unconcerned about vandalism directed at the security cameras on the new rail cars because it hasn't been an issue on buses. For one thing, the cameras would record the vandal in the act, officials said.

"There are multiple cameras on each vehicle and they record from several different angles," CTA spokeswoman Noelle Gaffney said.

The cameras for the new rail cars also incorporate cellular modems to let CTA personnel communicate directly with passengers about service disruptions or offer other travel information.

CTA officials said they expect the new technology will address security concerns among riders that have increased since 2000 when the CTA phased out the last conductors on the remaining lines.

Until then, two CTA personnel rode on most trains—a motorman in the front car and a conductor in the middle car to open and close doors, collect fares and, in an

unofficial capacity, provide some deterrence to criminal activity. Many CTA customers, fearful of being victimized by roving con artists, pickpockets or other criminals, regularly sat in the middle car with the conductor.

The new trains will reach speeds of up to 70 M.P.H., up from the current CTA limit of 55 m.p.h. But the actual running time is often much slower due to slow zones put in place to maintain safety over rickety tracks.

Currently, slow zones affect about 17 percent of CTA track, down from 22 percent last October.

"The CTA is committed to put 'rapid' back in transit," Huberman said.

Track and railroad tie repairs are scheduled for completion by year's end on the Blue Line between the Addison Street stop and O'Hare International Airport. Work also is under way or will start soon on the Red Line subway from the Harrison Street stop to North/Clybourn, on the Brown and Purple/Evanston Express Line elevated tracks from Diversey Parkway to Wellington Avenue, on the Brown Line from Western Avenue to Southport Avenue and on the Red Line from Addison Street to Lawrence Avenue.

Meanwhile, the new rail-car contract will allow the CTA to retire trains that are up to 37 years old—well beyond the federally recommended 25-year life for transit trains, officials said.

To make the \$604 million purchase, the CTA will use mostly federal funds and a local funding match that was secured several years ago—long before recent state legislation to fund mass-transit operations. The state does not have a capital-spending program, jeopardizing future federal funds already earmarked for Illinois.

Almost all the CTA's 2,100 buses are equipped with security cameras that record and store video images that could be used to investigate a crime.

The CTA and the Chicago Police Department's mass-transit unit are cooperating in a related pilot project that involves beaming images from the bus security cameras to police command centers and closed-circuit TV screens in police squad cars that are following a bus. Officials are testing the technology before deciding whether to expand it to the whole fleet.

CTA ridership in 2007 increased 1 percent overall from 2006, officials announced Wednesday. Bus ridership rose 3.6 percent, while train ridership fell 2.5 percent, mostly because of track and station work in connection with the \$530 million Brown Line renovation scheduled to be completed in 2009. [jhilkevitch@tribune.com](mailto:jhilkevitch@tribune.com)

## AN OMNIBUS MAN:

### GLENN M. ANDERSEN

1931 - 2007

Glenn Andersen, OSA member number 8, passed away on December 30, 2007. A 36-year veteran employee (1950-1986) of the Chicago Transit Authority, he was 76.

"Omnibus" once was the word for a city mass transit vehicle running on the street surface (not on rails). Today we say "bus" and may distinguish between "motor bus" and "trolley bus." Glenn was an omnibus man in both of those senses. At the beginning of his career at North Avenue station, he was occupied at times in the "gas garage" which serviced the motor buses and often in the "trolley garage" which worked on the trolley buses.

One of the little things he needed to know as a gas bus man was which two buses had the steering mechanism adjusted off-center to enable "U" turns at each end of the Fullerton Extension and North Extension lines.

He often picked an assignment at a North Avenue outpost, the Avondale Yard off Central Avenue where the Kennedy Expressway is today. Besides a gravel-surfaced yard for overnight storage, Avondale featured a prefabricated building which earlier had been at Kimball and Peterson for another trolley bus line. The structure provided a little space for indoor bus maintenance and had an office-lunchroom area separated from the buses by partitions and a ceiling. One night while Glenn was in the office, an electrician entered the room, landing on the table after falling through the ceiling from where he had been working below the roof of the building. The fellow wasn't hurt, but he was embarrassed to admit it was the second time he'd committed that same faux pas over a period of several years.

Some of the early OSA members knew that "omnibus" also was a Latin word which can be translated as "to all" or "for all." Glenn was a transit man omnibus; because he was "for all" transit modes—not only motor buses and trolley buses—and worked with many of them at CTA. The North Avenue station had five streetcar lines when Glenn was hired, and he became familiar with some of the idiosyncrasies of the cars.

The Armitage Avenue line used the multiple unit cars (singly, as one-man cars). By then the original rubber insulation on their low-voltage control wiring was aging. If you jumped up and down on the platforms of some cars, you could hear the contactors pick up when the wires shorted together.

With any streetcar, you could create new electrical trouble when you drilled into the car sides to mount holders for advertising placards. When they finished, the men would gingerly touch a trolley pole to the wire and immediately find out if they'd drilled into any of the high-voltage wiring.

Glenn rose rapidly through the ranks. Although he had started on the Surface Division, he became best known for his work with rapid transit cars. He second-sourced replacement parts for the 4000-series cars, which already were obsolescent. He engineered the conversion of articulated car 5003 to Westinghouse equipment to get it back into productive service. He contributed to dozens--maybe hundreds--of circuit or mechanical modifications to improve functioning of the 6000-series cars.

As part of the design team for the new 2200s, he was largely responsible for introducing stainless steel "L" car construction to Chicago. First he suggested to his colleagues that bids be invited on stainless steel as an alternate to steel and aluminum car bodies. Stainless steel turned out to cost about \$1000 more per car. Next he convinced both the CTA management and the city (which was buying these cars) that the advantages of stainless steel--which aluminum could not match--were worth the extra \$150,000 for the order.

Experience justified that decision, so now the CTA fleet is 100% stainless steel. Glenn wrote the specifications for the next purchase, the 2400s. He served as an in-plant inspector during construction of the 2600s.

Glenn "bought" the first of the diesel-powered Snowfighter units, which were an international purchase. He recognized that CTA's track curvature would be an issue, but he couldn't persuade the designer that there would be any problem. After the difficulty made itself unmistakably apparent, he had the unit sent off the property for the necessary modifications. Needless to say, the later units were built to fit on the first try!

He also specified and bought smaller support vehicles such as radio supervisors' cars. But a transit system isn't entirely vehicles. He supervised escalator maintenance, which was performed by a contractor. Behind the scenes in the Dearborn Subway the escalator men had a small work room with concrete walls and ceiling. They had improved the decor by wallpapering all the concrete surfaces. Glenn had to pull rank to get that distraction removed. Maybe the pinups really constituted a fire hazard as he asserted; unquestionably they were hot.

Glenn worked with rapid transit station floor layouts, agents' tricks, turnstiles and transfer-issuing machines, always with an eye for improved passenger flow and efficiency. He planned the extension of the line supervision system to cover the new Congress Branch with Esterline-Angus recorders.

He participated in a walking survey of all the signs on the rapid transit. On that project, along the Stock Yards Branch he decided to walk on the track ties (scheduling his "meets" with the trains at station platforms) rather than on the badly deteriorated wooden walkway between the tracks. For the bus system he scouted pavement conditions and new residential construction to optimize

the routing of service extensions. All of these projects involved a combination of office work and field work.

Respected by his bosses as a keen trouble-shooter, he kept a pair of coveralls in the office for the times when he was sent to clear a nearby blockade on the "L." In the days when crush-loaded eight-car trains ran on a headway of less than 2 minutes, even a ten-minute delay was considered a catastrophe. Glenn's practical experience in the field enabled him to judge when to take a chance in moving a disabled train to the nearest place where it would be out of the way.

Early in his career Glenn had worked alongside car cleaners who didn't know the numerals from 0 to 9. When they listed the vehicles they cleaned, they copied the shape of the numerals as painted on the side of the vehicles! Later Glenn worked with department heads and general managers who certainly could read and write. He always learned from everyone he met on any job at any level.

One individual whose achievement particularly impressed Glenn was the president of the union local representing the ex-Chicago Motor Coach employees, a small minority among the CTA Surface Division. The man persuaded the members that it was in their best interest to merge into Division 241, a step which eliminated his own union position.

Any place on the CTA system was Glenn's home. He felt as comfortable a couple of inches above the high-water line in Hegewisch as he did in the seventh-floor offices at the Merchandise Mart.

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## Seeking some clarity on light rail

**KANSAS CITY** - In recent weeks the local light-rail debate has become oddly diffused. The Kansas City Council repealed the fatally flawed plan developed by Clay Chastain, and seemed to open the floor for all sorts of ideas.

Recently, some proponents have even discussed the far-fetched possibility of a subway. Unless the projected costs are much lower than anyone expects, that idea should be quietly pushed aside.

Next month council member Ed Ford, chairman of the transportation and infrastructure committee, plans to give this discussion a tighter focus with a series of resolutions.

Good. The measures he envisions would put the council on record concerning the route, the technology and the funding for a light-rail line, based on a plan endorsed recently by a citizen's task force.

That blueprint foresees a system from the Northland to the Country Club Plaza, with a spur east to Prospect Avenue.

In an informal work session Thursday, council member John Sharp objected that the plan included no rail link to his southeast Kansas City district.

Yet the plan is called a "starter" line for a reason: There isn't enough money to quickly extend rails to every part of the community.

Another issue the council must decide is when to present a plan to the voters. Under state law, the city next year will have only one chance to win approval. So officials must forget any notion of scheduling an election for April and, if the first attempt fails, trying again in August or November.

So Mayor Mark Funkhouser was right in suggesting the election take place in November. Planners would have more time to work out specifics such as where the route should run and where the stations should be. Voter turnout would be higher in November because of the presidential election.

Ford also offered the idea that the city could build part of the system, perhaps up to two miles, solely with local money. That would jump-start the building process because the city would not have to wait for state and federal money to come through. It's a good suggestion, well worth pursuing.

Dec. 15, 2007, 1:33PM

## **Our missing mobility piece is commuter rail**

By REP. JOHN CULBERSON  
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Time is our most precious commodity. Whether we spend it with family and friends, at work, or just relaxing, time allows us to do the things that we enjoy. But unlike other commodities, time is finite and irreplaceable.

Every day we drive to work in the morning and sit in traffic on our crowded freeways, we lose time. Houston drivers lose an estimated 56 hours every year because of traffic. The reason is simple: The number of cars and trucks on the road has gone up faster than new roads are built.

The solution to our traffic problems involves a combination of freeways, toll roads and mass transit. It can be seen partly in the record-setting reconstruction of the Katy Freeway with its signature toll lanes and

express commuter bus service. This model freeway is being completely rebuilt in half the time originally planned. Despite the collapse of federal and state dollars for new highway construction, it is fully funded. When it is finished within the next eight months, it will cut your travel time in half.

The only piece missing from the new Katy Freeway is high speed commuter rail. I encouraged the Metropolitan Transit Authority to include a commuter rail line and Metro had plenty of chances to reserve space for it, but they couldn't make up their minds and we couldn't delay construction waiting for them.

For all of the glowing publicity the Main Street Line in downtown Houston receives, it doesn't make our morning commutes any easier because it isn't taking cars off our freeways.

For mass transit to ease congestion, it must be designed as an integrated system. The Metro Solutions plan that voters approved in 2003 was presented as an integrated transit system with a 50 percent increase in bus service, and 64 miles of light rail, but it included only 8 miles of commuter rail. I would be hard pressed to find a single commuter from the suburbs who thinks that 8 miles of commuter rail is sufficient for an area with a population approaching 5 million people.

Cynics complain that Houston is years behind other cities in the development of our transit system because voters didn't approve a light rail plan until 2003, but we have had the benefit of learning from the transit successes and failures of other major cities.

The most important lesson from the transit experiment is that light rail cannot survive without commuter rail, which cannot survive without buses. Houston has always had a renowned and successful bus service, but the lack of progress on expanding our rail system and attracting new riders has led to cutbacks in bus service.

Our own city within a city, the Texas Medical Center, is a case in point. Measured by commercial space, the Texas Medical Center is bigger than downtown Denver and about the same size as downtown Pittsburgh. Both Denver and Pittsburgh have direct light rail service from the suburbs into their downtown areas. Denver has 31 local buses, 21 express buses and 9 regional buses with service into downtown. Pittsburgh has 100 local buses and 60 express buses with service into downtown. The Medical Center has only three Metro buses with direct service and four with local service for the 160,000 people who enter and exit its campus every day.

Since voters approved the Metro Solutions plan in 2003, Metro has switched modes from light rail, to bus rapid transit, back to light rail. This frequent and sudden gear

shifting has thoroughly confused the public, elected officials, and now the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as evidenced by their recent response letter to Metro President Frank Wilson.

What some see as a rebuke of Metro's plans by FTA I see as an opportunity for Metro to work with FTA and local stakeholders to develop a new and improved, comprehensive transit system that includes a major expansion of local and regional bus service, and high-speed commuter rail to our airports and busiest suburbs, all tying directly into a light rail network inside the 610 Loop.

Houston is growing outward in all directions, and the time is right for Metro to rethink the outdated 2003 Metro Solutions plan and articulate a bold, but realistic plan that will help us reclaim some of the time we spend trapped in traffic.

Culberson, a Republican, represents Texas' 7th U.S. Congressional District, which is west Houston. He is a member of the House Appropriations Committee ([www.culberson.house.gov](http://www.culberson.house.gov)).

## Court says SEPTA transfers must stay

By MARK McDONALD  
Philadelphia Daily News

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In a 6-to-1 decision, the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania yesterday ruled against SEPTA in its legal battle to eliminate paper transfers.

Commonwealth Court focused on a procedural issue, not the merits of the case, and declared the controversy moot.

After SEPTA eliminated the transfers and the city successfully appealed to Common Pleas Court, gaining their reinstatement, the SEPTA board in late September increased transfers from 60 cents to 75 cents.

As a result, the court said the controversy about whether SEPTA had abused its discretion "has ceased to exist."

A SEPTA statement yesterday said the agency was evaluating the impact of the decision. "SEPTA's ultimate goal is to install a modern fare collection system in which paper transfers will have no place," the statement said.

"What they basically have done in Commonwealth Court is put a period at the end of this SEPTA fare-hike case and the issue relating to transfers," said City Solicitor Romulo Diaz Jr.

Diaz contended that because the opinion had a strong endorsement of the city's position, he doubted that SEPTA would reconsider eliminating transfers until the new collection system is in place. \*

## Beach seeks state aid to buy rail line

By Tom Holden  
The Virginian-Pilot  
© December 27, 2007

Virginia Beach wants a \$15 million grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to help pay for the rail line that runs between Newtown and Birdneck roads if an agreement to sell it is ever reached.

The track is owned by Norfolk Southern Corp. and is considered the logical extension of Norfolk's light rail project, which began construction this month with utility work at Harbor Park.

The \$232.1 million rail line will run from Eastern Virginia Medical School to Newtown Road, a 7.4-mile route that stops at the threshold of the region's most populous city.

Project proponents have long argued that extending the line into Virginia Beach is important for its long-term success. But that can't move forward until an agreement is reached on the ownership of the rail property.

"This application means Virginia Beach is serious about pursuing the purchase of the Norfolk Southern right of way, with the assumption that it will be used for transportation and the possible expansion of the light rail system," Robert Matthias, assistant to Virginia Beach City Manager Jim Spore, said Wednesday.

The application to VDOT is being made under the Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund, which received about \$305 million last year as part of the General Assembly's efforts to bolster the state's investments in transportation.

The application to Reta Busher, VDOT's chief financial officer, says that Virginia Beach wants "to create more transit-oriented development along this corridor" and may include along the route a bicycle path directly linking the two cities.

The Norfolk Southern route is considered ideal because it runs parallel to Virginia Beach Boulevard and through the commercial heart of the resort city, including the thriving Town Center area.

Virginia Beach backed out of a larger light rail line in 1999. In 2003, Hampton Roads Transit, which is building the light rail project, agreed to negotiate the sale of the entire 15-mile rail line on behalf of Virginia Beach and Norfolk.

The joint negotiations were unsuccessful. Norfolk eventually reached agreement with the corporation to run part of light rail along a segment of the Norfolk Southern tracks, while talks with Virginia Beach continued.

Norfolk Southern reportedly wants \$40 million for the 10.6 miles of unused track, which includes a 66-foot-

wide right of way, while the Beach has offered less based on an appraisal it had done.

"The two entities remain very far apart in their estimates of the value of the line," the application said.

In November, Norfolk Southern began the process of officially abandoning the rail line while retaining ownership of it, move federal regulations required before it can be sold.

During its most recent meeting, the Virginia Beach City Council passed an ordinance authorizing the acquisition of the rail line, giving the city the right to buy it.

If an agreement cannot be reached, the city is prepared to use its powers of eminent domain to seize property, an option that could prove costly.

Virginia Beach City Attorney Les Lilley said the negotiations thus far have been "cordial."

"We both seek to reach a fair price, but we have been unable to do that so far," Lilley said. "We have been waiting for them to abandon the rail line, and they are in the process of doing that."

Virginia Beach has retained attorney Hunter W. Sims Jr., of Kaufman & Canoles, to represent its interests in the matter, Lilley said.

Susan M. Terpay, director of public relations for Norfolk Southern, said in a written statement that the company is "open to receiving an offer and prepared to negotiate a sale" of the property based on its "fair market value."

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## SEPTA looking to add ticket machines

By Paul Nussbaum INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Under fire from rail passengers and a local legislator over its new on-board ticket surcharge, SEPTA is looking at putting ticket vending machines at its rail stations.

SEPTA took the last of its old ticket vending machines out of service in January, citing their inability to accept newly designed U.S. currency.

SEPTA's new policy requires passengers to pay a higher onboard fare, even if the station where they board has no ticket agent. Of SEPTA's 153 rail stations, 75 have no ticket sales, and very few booths are open afternoons and weekends.

In a letter to state Rep. Josh Shapiro (D., Montgomery), SEPTA chairman Pasquale "Pat" Deon Sr. said SEPTA staff "has been asked to research the cost of new ticket machines and look into the availability and cost of leased

ticket machines to be made available until a new fare system is in place."

SEPTA is also looking at the possibility of using ATM machines to dispense tickets and passes, Deon wrote.

Shapiro last month asked Deon and SEPTA general manager Faye Moore to rescind the surcharge policy and said he might introduce legislation to force repeal.

SEPTA declined to do away with the surcharges, saying it wanted to discourage time-consuming cash transactions on board trains. But the agency last month started a "fare credit" program in which train conductors give passengers who pay the onboard surcharge a credit that can be redeemed by buying a return-trip ticket from a ticket agent the same day.

Shapiro was encouraged enough by SEPTA's decision to consider vending machines to "hold on any legislative remedies until he sees the results of these efforts," said Matthew Vahey, Shapiro's chief of staff.

SEPTA expects to have information on costs and availability of vending machines in "a couple of weeks," spokesman Richard Maloney said today.

Contact staff writer Paul Nussbaum at 215-854-4587 or pnussbaum@phillynews.com.

## Study of Lake Oswego rail link OK'd

**Options - The effects of a streetcar or enhanced bus service will be examined**

Friday, December 14, 2007

YUXING ZHENG

The Oregonian Staff

Though years away, a streetcar linking South Waterfront to Lake Oswego took another step closer to reality Thursday when Metro councilors approved an environmental impact study.

The study will examine the effects of two transportation options: a streetcar ending at Johns Landing or Lake Oswego or enhanced bus service along Southwest Macadam Avenue and Oregon 43.

The move eliminates the bus rapid transit option creating bus-only lanes at about eight intersections between Portland and Lake Oswego, which drew limited interest in study groups and low ridership estimates.

"This is a quality project," said Councilor Carlotta Collette, who supports a streetcar extension to Lake Oswego, which sits in her district. "It'll be an important link in the regional system."

The study would begin in January 2009 and take 12 to 18 months to complete, said Karen Withrow, a Metro spokeswoman. A combination of federal grants and money from local governments would pay for the \$5.5 million study.

Ten officials and residents testified Thursday in support of a streetcar, though they disagreed if it should end in Johns Landing or Lake Oswego.

Roger Martin, executive director of the Oregon Transit Association and a Lake Oswego resident, said a streetcar to Lake Oswego would best meet regional need despite opposition from property owners in Dunthorpe and Johns Landing.

"They have no desire to solve transportation problems in Lake Oswego or West Linn," he said.

A streetcar would extend from its current end in South Waterfront to three possible sites: temporarily or permanently at Nevada Street in Johns Landing, or in Lake Oswego at either the Albertsons on State Street or the Safeway on Boones Ferry Road. If the streetcar ends in Johns Landing, TriMet would probably offer expanded bus service connecting to Lake Oswego.

"We want to connect Portland and Lake Oswego without having to force people to transfer," said Dave Unsworth, TriMet's project development manager. "I think we're supportive of looking at this. Generally, we think it should go further south."

If the streetcar extends to Lake Oswego, it would run along Macadam Avenue or the Willamette Shore Trolley line, which is in public ownership.

The Willamette right of way is valued at \$75 million and could be used to leverage up to \$112.5 million in federal money.

The enhanced bus service option would mean more frequent service, and the addition of bus shelters, benches and lighting along stops on Oregon 43. But because enhanced bus service would not use the right of way, it would not qualify for federal funds.

Constructing the streetcar extension could cost between \$200 million and \$216 million with annual maintenance of \$2.2 million, according to estimates from Metro. Those figures include the cost of a pedestrian and bicycle path that officials and residents have strongly supported. Construction on a streetcar would begin in 2013 at the earliest.

A steering committee in September recommended the streetcar as the preferred option for further study. The streetcar is estimated to have the highest ridership of all the alternatives by 2025 and the shortest travel time -- 24 minutes from Lake Oswego to Portland, compared to 42 minutes with bus rapid transit.

Lake Oswego Mayor Judie Hammerstad, said Metro is wasting time and money to study anything other than a streetcar to Lake Oswego. Buses along Oregon 43 will not meet ridership numbers, take advantage of federal funds or fulfill the goal of providing a high-capacity route linking Lake Oswego to Portland, she said.

"The need is to take the congestion off 43," she said. "It will be a parking lot in 2025."

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## Federal rules prefer buses over streetcar expansion

**Travel - Portland wants money for an eastside line, but the transit administration says buses are more efficient**

Thursday, December 27, 2007

DYLAN RIVERA

The Oregonian Staff

Portland officials, eager to expand the city's heralded streetcar line across the Willamette River, are learning that federal transit managers favor buses for efficiency and may delay or withhold construction funding.

The expansion, pegged to cost \$147 million, would extend the streetcar from the Pearl District across the Broadway Bridge and south to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, nearly completing a streetcar loop of the city's core. The federal government, according to the Portland City Council's plan, would pay for half.

But the City Council scrambled in early September to meet a deadline to apply for funds, only to learn from the Federal Transit Administration that Portland is failing to meet a cost-effectiveness test that planners here say is biased against streetcars in favor of high-capacity bus lines.

At stake is about \$200 million in federal money that could provide the first national program for streetcars in cities across the nation. More than 60 cities nationwide have ideas for emulating the Portland Streetcar and the dense mix of housing and commercial development that accompanies its downtown route.

Despite the chance to compete for the new pot of money, however, every city except Portland has balked. Seattle, which just opened its first streetcar line earlier this month, says the process favors bus rapid transit -- the type of line that has large vehicles traveling in their own lanes separated from car traffic.

Transit administration officials have said the Office of Management and Budget, a department in the White House, has ordered them to raise standards for cost effectiveness when judging transit projects. That contrasts with the bill Congress passed in 2005, saying projects should be funded if they support public transportation, are cost-effective and boost local economic development.

Meanwhile, two Oregon congressmen are hammering away at the issue on a national basis. U.S. Democratic Reps. Peter DeFazio and Earl Blumenauer led efforts to zero out the administration's 2008 budget for making rules on how to value streetcars versus buses. The measure passed last week as part of a massive bill that funded 14 Cabinet departments.

Both congressmen want the government to implement the Small Starts program, a law that Blumenauer wrote to provide federal money to proliferate streetcar lines

and dense urban development in cities across the nation. But two years after Congress passed the law, the administration hasn't funded a single streetcar line and instead proposed rules that would give preference to bus rapid transit systems over streetcars.

DeFazio said Congress was forced to prevent the administration from making a bias against streetcars permanent.

"If they wrote a rule like that and they implemented it, we'd be stuck with it for a minimum of two or more years, and that's not acceptable," DeFazio said.

The transit administration has published rules that would make cost-effectiveness the key test of whether a project should be funded. Zoning for high density and saving miles driven in cars would be combined with congestion relief under an effectiveness test. Together those would count for half the benefits allowed.

The result?

"If you build 5,000 units of housing along that line and people walked from those units of housing and get on the streetcar, they would not count under their criteria," DeFazio said.

The only riders that count are the ones that transfer from a bus or other transit to get to the streetcar line, he said. "It's totally misanthropic," DeFazio said. "It's set up to make streetcar never pencil out."

TriMet planners have traded memos back and forth with the transit administration, arguing about what factors should be included in cost-effectiveness. The haggling over costs and benefits could go on for six more months yet not interfere with the project's schedule, said Rick Gustafson, executive director of Portland Streetcar Inc. Several crucial next steps can proceed even while the cost-effectiveness discussions continue, he said. Next month, the project will need to complete a cost estimate. The project could get a big political boost if it is included in the president's budget in early February.

If the transit administration signs off on a construction agreement for Portland's \$75 million request, by summer, that could ease the way for \$40 million to start construction in the 2008-09 budget.

While Portland, TriMet and Metro planners believe in the streetcar extension and also agree with DeFazio's criticism of the transit administration, they have to proceed with caution through delicate talks, Gustafson said.

"Since you are asking for money, it's generally a good idea not to go kicking the people who are supposed to give you the money," he said.

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## Light Rail Train Hits Derailed Coal Train

### No Injuries Reported In RTD Passenger Train

POSTED: 6:54 am MST December 11, 2007

UPDATED: 7:05 pm MST December 11, 2007

**LITTLETON, Colo.** -- Nearly 30 passengers were on board a Southwest Corridor light rail train that collided with a derailed coal train in Littleton before dawn Tuesday.

There were no injuries to passengers, but the front car of the light rail train was knocked off its tracks near Santa Fe Boulevard and Prince Street.

It was snowing at the time but it wasn't clear if weather played a role in the 6 a.m. crash, which occurred during the morning rush hour. It looked like something out of a movie, Littleton Police Chief Heather Coogan said. "I kept thinking, 'Where's Bruce Willis?'"



Passengers can still use light rail up to the Oxford station, but will have to transfer onto a bridge bus to get to Mineral and downtown Littleton stations until the tracks can be repaired, said Sgt. Trent Cooper of the Littleton Police Department.

Twenty-five cars derailed out of a 106-car coal train operated by Union Pacific. The coal train runs on Burlington Northern tracks, which parallel the light rail tracks. The coal train was heading south when one-quarter of its cars derailed on the curve. The train operator, Robert Vialpando, said he barely had time to let off the brakes let alone stop the train before it hit.

"If I had noticed that train 10 second later, we probably would have had some fatalities," Vialpando said.

The first car of the light rail train hit the coal train, causing its front wheels to move from the track, Serna said. All of the light rail cars remained upright and the passengers on board exited the train without a problem. Workers are shoveling the spilled coal into large dump trucks.

"It's just a matter of clean up," Cooper said. Workers estimated they would have all the train cars as well as most of the coal removed by 5:00 a.m. Wednesday. It should take about 100 truckloads to carry away all the coal, Cooper said.

The storm also delayed the arrival of investigators and heavy equipment for moving the coal.

The rail crash also affected traffic. Northbound Santa Fe was closed for more than an hour at Mineral Avenue to allow emergency vehicles to access the crash site. The northbound lanes were reopened just after 7:30 a.m.

## RTD ponders barriers to protect light rails

Fences issue immediate alert if nearby freight trains impede the track

By Jeffrey Leib  
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 12/22/2007 11:49:28 PM MST



An RTD light-rail train, right, passes near a freight train in Littleton, where the two sets of tracks are 18K feet apart. (Karl Gehring, The Denver Post)

Following the derailment of a coal train in the Southwest rail corridor this month, the Regional Transportation District is considering placing a warning barrier between freight and passenger-rail tracks.

The "intrusion barrier," a type of electric fence, would not prevent derailment wreckage from spilling onto RTD tracks, but it could provide an instant alert that would stop trains in the area, said Henry Stopplecamp, RTD's engineering technical services manager.

The electronic barrier does have a drawback — by cutting the fence vandals can stop trains on a lark, Stopplecamp said.

On Dec. 11, cars on a Union Pacific Railroad coal train derailed south of Arapahoe Community College in

Littleton, sending mangled wreckage and coal onto RTD's nearby track as a northbound light-rail train approached.

The lead light-rail car of the two-car train hit the debris and came off its track, but the passenger cars remained upright and no one was injured.

"I saw cars go over; the second I saw them, I hit the train," said Robert Vialpando, 43, driver of the RTD train. "It happened right in front of my eyes."

If the light-rail train had been just slightly north of where it was, it might have caught the direct impact from the wrecked coal cars, said Vialpando, who was honored by RTD last week for his effort at helping avert a tragedy.

The accident underscored safety vulnerability on the Southwest line: the close proximity of heavy freight trains and light-rail cars that do not meet the Federal Railroad Administration's highest crashworthiness standards.

### *Lots of traffic, tight spaces*

The distance from the center of RTD's track to the center of the nearest freight track is only 16 feet near the community college.

At the location of the derailment, a little farther south, the track distance is about 18.5 feet.

A loaded 120-car coal train weighs as much 17,000 tons. Each full coal car weighs about 140 tons compared with about 55 tons for a light-rail car packed with passengers.

This month's derailment was the first time since Southwest Corridor light rail started seven years ago that a freight train breached RTD's track, Stopplecamp said.

As many as 33 freight trains use the Southwest Corridor each day.

Following a January 2005 accident in the Los Angeles area involving freight and passenger cars on adjacent tracks, the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads told RTD they would not allow light-rail trains to operate on FasTracks rail corridors next to freight trains.

RTD now will use heavier commuter-rail cars for the train from Union Station to Denver International Airport and all other FasTracks rail corridors where right of way will be shared with freight trains.

Commuter-rail cars weigh about 100 tons apiece, nearly double that of a light-rail car, said John Shonsey, RTD's senior engineering manager.

Commuter-rail cars also meet federal crashworthiness standards — making them better able to withstand impact from heavy freight cars if there is a derailment, said Warren Flatau, spokesman for the Federal Railroad Administration in Washington.

If a freight train derails and strikes the side of a light-rail car, "the passengers and crew members on light rail are much more likely to sustain life-threatening injuries or be killed," Flatau said.

### ***Under investigation***

The recent derailment still is under investigation. Union Pacific sent pieces of rail and wheel to be analyzed by technicians, and the railroad is awaiting test results, UP spokesman Mark Davis said.

In searching for clues to the cause of the accident, UP officials have examined the train's "event recorder," much like an airplane's flight data recorder, or "black box," which records speed, throttle position, air pressure and other measurements.

In the area of the derailment freight trains have a speed limit of 45 mph.

Jeffrey Leib: 303-954-1645 or jleib@denverpost.com

Monday, February 4, 2008 - 4:50 PM MST

## **RTD orders \$184 million of light rail cars from Siemens**

Denver Business Journal

The Regional Transportation District has signed a \$184 million contract for 55 new light rail cars to be built by Siemens Transportation Systems Inc.

The cars will be used on the \$6.1 billion FasTracks project, which was approved by voters in 2004 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. The project will build six new rail lines, extend three existing lines and build a bus rapid transit corridor along U.S. 36.

The purchase, approved by RTD's board of directors in November, is Siemens' largest contract ever, the company said.

Siemens Transportation systems is based in Sacramento, Calif., and is a subsidiary of Siemens AG (NYSE: SI) of Munich, Germany.

RTD accelerated its purchase for light rail cars -- signing a contract before the first of FasTracks' 122-mile system of rail lines starts operation -- in order to beat rising materials costs.

"By ordering all the cars needed for FasTracks now, RTD benefits by saving costs through purchasing at today's prices, and having a uniform fleet which will result in operational and maintenance savings," said Cal Marsella, RTD's general manager.

To date, Siemens has delivered 95 vehicles to RTD since the early 1990s. The company said its most recent

order from RTD was to deliver 34 cars -- of which nine have been delivered and seven are already in operation.

The delivery of the 55 new vehicles for the new contract is scheduled to begin in 2009 and go through 2012.

## **Transit-first street plan hailed. In a first, Cherry St. to get separate streetcar right-of-way on east side**

Dec 11, 2007 04:30 AM

TESS KALINOWSKI

TRANSPORTATION REPORTER

**TORONTO** - It is being hailed as a success in neighbourhood-building where, as yet, no neighbourhood exists.

The plan for Cherry St. in the West Don Lands development area achieves two firsts, according to local politicians and residents:

It puts the needs of transit riders, pedestrians and cyclists ahead of motorists.

The interests of nearby residents seeking a vibrant, intimate neighbourhood have been built into the plan.

"As a result of this we are building a better neighbourhood," says Councillor Pam McConnell (Ward 28, Toronto Centre-Rosedale). "On how to mix the various modes of transportation, this will be a model."

Unlike Toronto's other streetcar routes, which traditionally run in mixed traffic and board passengers from platforms in the middle of the road, the Cherry St. plan calls for putting all the transit on the east side of the street, running in two directions, with a tree-lined platform separating it from other traffic.

Parking, two single vehicle lanes running in opposite directions, and bike lanes all would be relegated to the west side.

Five-metre sidewalks on each side leave plenty of room for pedestrians and outdoor cafes.

The plan is the fruit of much consultation, McConnell said. Transit planners might normally attend four community meetings on a project like this, but they've met with residents' dozens of times.

The Cherry St. streetcar right-of-way, which would link to the King car at its northern end, is in phase one of the 32-hectare West Don Lands development being overseen by Waterfront Toronto. Construction is set to begin in 2009, and streetcars would start running in the fall of 2010, serving 4 million passengers a year once the project is finished in 2018.

The design presented to TTC commissioners last week could be approved by City Council next month. Then

there's a 30-day period in which the plan must be posted for public comment before it legally can precede, according to Bill Dawson, the TTC's superintendent of route planning, who has worked with city planners and residents on the project.

Opportunities to build a neighbourhood oriented to transit are rare, he says.

But the Cherry St. configuration isn't likely to replace the traditional centre-road streetcar pattern. For one thing, it requires building truck access in behind the buildings on the transit side of the street, something that couldn't be retrofitted into most existing neighbourhoods.

There's also the challenge of right turn signals. The transitway envisioned for this section of Cherry would be only 800 to 900 metres long, or about three stops. To build it any longer would slow down streetcars because they would have to constantly pause to make way for turning motorists, Dawson said.

"This represented a sort of hammered-out compromise. Some people were very much wanting this to be a small local neighbourhood, and it's a bit of a challenge putting a 30-metre streetcar on a small local street," he said.

Overall, it's a good compromise, said lawyer Cynthia Wilkey, chair of the West Don Lands Committee, which is made up mostly of residents in the Corktown and Distillery neighbourhoods.

Residents were concerned about the 38-metre width of the street in the original plan.

"We looked at (it) and said this is not good urban design. It bisects this new community we're trying to create," she said.

To narrow the street to 34.5 metres, two lanes of traffic were taken out.

## TTC to eye Canadian content for new streetcars

**Commission will seek competitive bids, but is expected to demand a percentage of parts, assembly work be done domestically**

JEFF GRAY December 18, 2007

Potentially controversial rules to ensure the city's next fleet of streetcars are partly made in Canada are on the agenda today at a special meeting of the Toronto Transit Commission.

The transit agency plans to spend more than \$1-billion to build 204 low-floor streetcars to replace its aging fleet if it gets the needed provincial and federal funds. And it could double its order if its light-rail expansion plans over the next decade go ahead.

The last time the TTC went shopping for rail vehicles - its next generation of subway cars - controversy erupted over its decision not to seek competitive bids and instead to negotiate a deal directly with Montreal-based Bombardier, the only established Canadian manufacturer, in order to save jobs at its Thunder Bay plant.

This time, the TTC plans to allow multiple bids, but is expected to demand that a percentage of parts and assembly work be done in Canada, a position with strong support from Mayor David Miller and even from city councillors who criticized the subway contract.

Domestic content rules are common in such deals around the world. In the United States, 60 per cent of all public transit vehicles must be U.S.-made to receive federal funds.

But the TTC must walk a fine line to avoid ordering so much Canadian content that it appears to favour Bombardier unfairly and prompts foreign bidders to drop out.

The TTC will discuss the report behind closed doors before holding a public session on the streetcar project today.

TTC chairman Adam Giambrone wouldn't talk numbers yesterday, but he did say that the Canadian content provision is most likely not going to exceed 60 per cent - the estimated amount of Canadian content going into the TTC's new Thunder Bay-built subway cars. He also said it would likely not be less than 10 per cent.

"I support a Canadian content provision because this is potentially billions of dollars of taxpayers' money, and it should be invested in Canada," Mr. Giambrone said.

Bombardier vice-president Mike Hardt said his firm was willing to compete for the deal on a level playing field. With at least \$2-billion of work at stake, he said, his foreign competitors will still bid and invest in new factories in Canada to meet whatever rules are in place.

Mr. Hardt said a contract with a 60-per-cent Canadian content rule would create at least 600 jobs, and return hundreds of millions to the federal and provincial governments in taxes.

Mario Pélouin, the director of business development for the Canadian arm of German-based Siemens - another of the half-dozen companies eyeing the contract - would not say how high a Canadian content provision would make his firm to bow out.

While Siemens says it would make much of the streetcar in Austria and Germany, Mr. Pélouin said the firm would do final assembly in Canada and maximize its use of local parts.

## Streetcars to have 25 per cent Canadian content

**TTC follows recommendations to keep foreign bidders in competition; Bombardier has argued even 30 per cent was too low**

JEFF GRAY December 19, 2007

Toronto's next generation of streetcars should be 25 per cent Canadian made, the Toronto Transit Commission decided yesterday, in an effort to squeeze some domestic job creation into the \$1-billion contract, North America's biggest light-rail deal to date.

The move is also meant to avoid the controversy that dogged the TTC and Mayor David Miller last year, when the transit agency agreed to hand a \$674-million subway car contract to Montreal-based Bombardier without competition in order to preserve jobs at the firm's Thunder Bay plant.

A report from a private consultant Booz Allen Hamilton had warned the TTC that a Canadian-content requirement any higher than 21.8 to 25 per cent for the new streetcars could result in the politically embarrassing event of all foreign bidders dropping out, leaving only Bombardier.

The nine city councillors that make up the commission held a special meeting yesterday, hearing from labour activists who called for a 60 per cent Canadian content provision, similar to a federal rule in the United States.

The TTC voted to call on the federal and provincial governments to come up with across-the-board rules on Canadian content in transit vehicles.

"We are committed to jobs in Canada. ... It's just how far you can push without having a competitive environment," said TTC vice-chairman Joe Mihevc, a left-leaning councillor and ally of Mr. Miller.

"We have struck the right balance between good competition and preserving good manufacturing jobs in Canada."

TTC chairman Adam Giambrone said he would have liked to see a higher number than 25 per cent. However, he moved a motion to have the TTC demand an increase in Canadian content for the optional second phase of the contract, which contemplates buying up to 480 more vehicles for the city's suburban light-rail expansion plans.

Commissioner Glenn De Baeremaeker, applauded by a handful of union activists at the meeting, moved a motion to hand the entire contract to Bombardier without competition to create Canadian jobs. He was voted down.

Bombardier could not be reached for comment last night, but company vice-president Mike Hardt had said recently that 30 per cent Canadian content was "very, very low" and would only create about 200 jobs.

Other companies that have expressed an interest in bidding on the contract include German-based Siemens and Vossloh-Kiepe, and French-based Alstom, all of which have said publicly they would include some Canadian content in their streetcars. Czech-based Skoda has also expressed an interest in bidding.

Toronto is not alone in grappling with the issue. In Montreal, Bombardier's French competitor Alstom has launched a court action challenging the Quebec government's move to force the Montreal Transit Corp. to deal exclusively with Bombardier on a \$1-billion subway car order. A decision is expected next year.

In Vancouver, however, a public-private partnership is building the new Canada Line, a \$2.05-billion, partly tunnelled light-rail line to Richmond, B.C., and the Vancouver airport, and all 20 new automated vehicles are being completely built in South Korea by Hyundai Rotem Co. Bombardier, which builds Vancouver's current SkyTrain vehicles, bid on the contract but lost.

The line, funded with \$720-million in private investment and to be run for 30 years by a private consortium, InTransitBC, had no Canadian-content provisions in its tendering process, spokesman Steve Crombie said. This allowed it to get the latest, state-of-the-art rail technology at a good price, he said.

"It hasn't been an issue so far," Mr. Crombie said. "This is the best car you could get for the best price."

Toronto plans to buy at least 204 new low-floor streetcars at first to replace its aging fleet, if provincial and federal governments come up with the funding. If all goes according to plan, the first new cars will roll onto the city's rails in 2010.

## TTC has plans in place to improve 501 service

by Carole Stimmell Beach Metro Community News

The hierarchy at the TTC has heard the message, loud and clear. They acknowledge that service (or lack thereof) on the 501 Queen streetcar route is unacceptable. And most importantly of all, they are doing something about it.

While the staff report requested by Councillor Sandra Bussin for the TTC Commission will not be tabled until late January, some of the possibilities for improvements were discussed at two recent meetings.

On Dec. 4, the Toronto Environmental Alliance, Sierra Club and Rocket Riders sponsored a forum on the 501. Originally planned as a small discussion group, media attention on the issue caused the venue in Metro Hall to

be switched to a larger meeting room. The list of participants also grew to include Councillor Adam Giambrone, the chair of the TTC Commission; Rick Cornacchia, GM of TTC Operations; Mitch Stambler, TTC planning; and Paul Millett, TTC operations.

The forum began with James Bow of Transit Toronto and Steve Munro (a winner of the Jane Jacobs Prize) giving the background of the 501 line. Both Bow and Munro agreed that while the Queen line used to be the "premier streetcar line" in the city, it has fallen on hard times. Munro said that, "it is a textbook example of how to drive people away." According to Munro, 20 years ago the 501, 502 and 504 carried 90,000 people a day. Today that number has dropped to 47,000 – a decrease that hasn't been reflected on other routes.

Giambrone told the crowded room, "as somebody who doesn't own a car, I know your frustrations." He believes that any study of the Queen line should also consider the King route, and that issues such as increased parking restrictions and additional no-left turns needed to be factored into the solution.

Cornacchia said that he agreed with many of the observations made by Munro and Bow. "I think we can do better."

He said that he had already instituted a different form of route management for streetcar lines in the city, making the management more the subways rather than like buses.

"I'm not making excuses," he said. "We need to go forward on all fronts."

Millett and Stambler have more than a passing interest in improving the Queen Street line – they live in the Beach and ride it every day. (And by the way, get short-turned just as often as the rest of us.)

Millett, who makes decisions about how the route is managed, said that the TTC is making a major change in how it handles all streetcar routes. For many years, streetcar drivers were given very tight schedules and inspectors would make great efforts to keep every driver on his/her schedule – including short-turning cars that had fallen behind so they could get back on track.

Recently, however, the system has changed. Now streetcar routes will be more concerned with headway. (Headway is the interval between cars.) This is a much more customer oriented approach. For example, in the past a full streetcar might have been short-turned because the driver was behind schedule – dumping all those riders with no provision for a follow up car. In a headway environment, however, the driver would be able to finish the route to keep the headway between their car and the one following from becoming too great at the end of the route.

Stambler, who is in charge of planning how the route works, is passionate about public transit. "This is my kind of meeting," he said, "filled with people who want to make transit better." He even went further, "I think the service stinks...and has to be addressed...We need to get the right service, at the right time, to the right place."

That said, Stambler pointed out that Toronto was an anomaly. "No one else tries to run streetcars in mixed traffic."

There are three components to making streetcars work better in this environment, according to Stambler. The TTC can try working with route management and design. However, the city controls things such as giving TTC vehicles priority at traffic signals, expanding parking prohibitions and limiting left hand turns. Even such 'green' initiatives as putting in bicycle lanes can impact streetcars because it pushes more automobiles into fewer lanes of traffic.

The police are also a factor, because if they do not enforce no-parking rules or turn-lane restrictions, once again TTC slows down.

There was a lot of discussion at the meeting about the length of the 501 route. Munro insisted that one of the major problems with the route is that it is too long, and should be broken into at least two sections. But how the route would be divided is problematic.

Members of the audience also got the chance to put in their two cents. I had assumed that the majority would be from the East End; however, it seems that issues such as short-turning are just as prevalent in the West End.

The feeling of many 501 riders was summed up by Beacher Judy Jackson. She told the meeting that she was a filmmaker and that "it was easier to get around in a war zone than get out of the Beach."

Although a report she called for months ago is due in January, Councillor Bussin decided to see if she could get the ball rolling on improvements any sooner. She held a meeting on Dec. 10 with TTC officials and a few community leaders from Ward 32, including Harold Tabone and Steve Ottaway from the Beach Lakefront Neighbourhood Association, Charles Cameron, chair of the Beach BIA and myself.

After laying out the issues similar to those covered in the Dec. 4 meeting, the discussion turned to specifics.

The major problem with the section of the streetcar line between Kingston Road and Neville Park is that all the problems which occur along the route which cause streetcars to be delayed are fixed by short-turning before the ends. This happens both at Neville Park and at Long Branch.

## **Kenosha on the Go (Images of Rail)**

by Kenosha Streetcar Society

**Paperback:** 128 pages

**Publisher:** Arcadia Publishing (January 28, 2008)

### **Editorial Review**

#### **Book Description**

*Kenosha on the Go* chronicles 110 years of transportation in Kenosha. From the first interurban streetcar that reached Kenosha's northern city limits in 1897 to the existing transit system in 2007, this book covers local streetcar operations, trackless trolley and bus operations, the two electric interurbans that served Kenosha, and the North Western Railway. *Kenosha on the Go* also brings readers to the rebirth of streetcar operations in Kenosha at the dawn of the 21st century.

This 128-page book includes 215 photos, full historical text, and excellent maps. The majority of photographs in this book have never been published before.

#### **About the Author**

John F. Doyle, the author of this title, was raised in Chicago where streetcars, interurbans, "L" trains, subway trains, trackless trolleys (trolley buses), and buses were all part of the everyday scene. When his family got its first car in 1945, a favorite memory was driving down Sheridan Road from Chicago to Milwaukee. Passing through Kenosha and viewing those trackless trolleys amid the classic downtown buildings was always something special.

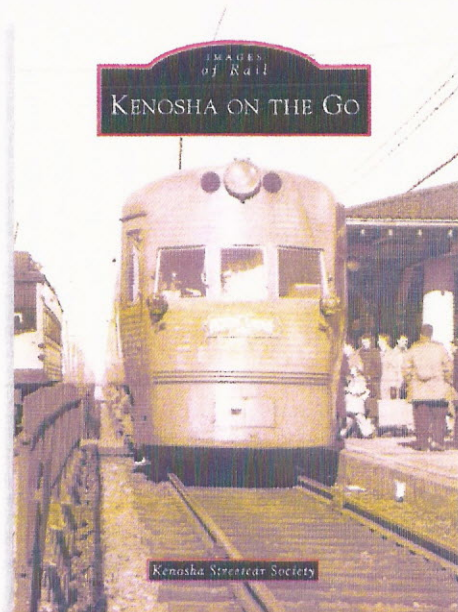
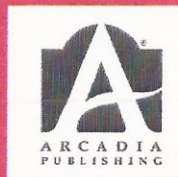
After graduating from Mendel Catholic High School in Chicago, he spent three years in the Marine Corps. Doyle worked for Butternut Bread in Chicago for 40 years which includes 32 years as account representative to Jewel Food Stores, Chicago's largest grocery chain. He worked briefly as a locomotive fireman and for several years drove Regional Transit Authority (RTA) diesel buses part time and served on the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Citizens Advisory Board (1989-1993). In 2002, Doyle co-founded the Kenosha Streetcar Society with Louis Rugani and served as its first Chairman from 2003 until 2006. Married to his wife, Diane, they reside in Western Springs, Illinois, a west suburb of Chicago.

#### **Cost/Availability**

List price is \$19.99. If not available at your favorite book store, contact Arcadia Publishing at 888-313-2665 for direct sales or information on where to purchase the book locally or visit [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com).

# Arcadia Publishing

KENOSHA ON THE GO by Kenosha Streetcar Society



## About the Book

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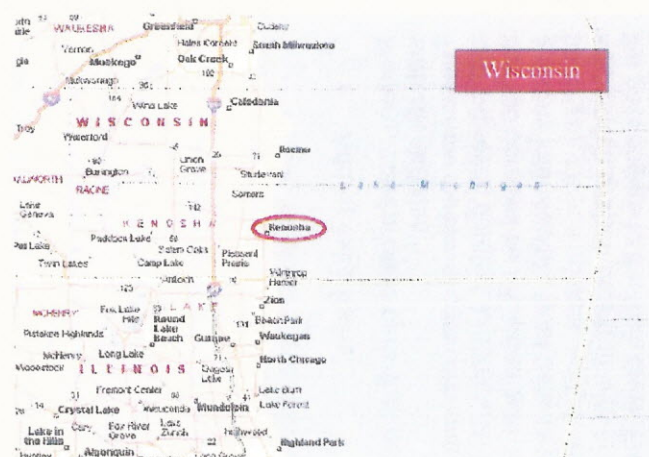
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## About the Author

Kenosha Streetcar Society member Kenneth C. Springirth, author of four Arcadia books, was instrumental in initiating *Kenosha on the Go*. John F. Doyle, the primary author of this title, cofounded the Kenosha Streetcar Society with Louis Rugani of Kenosha in 2002. Doyle was raised in Chicago where streetcars, interurbans, "L" trains, subway trains, trackless trolleys, and buses were all part of the everyday scene. When his family got its first car in 1945, a favorite memory was driving down Sheridan Road from Chicago to Milwaukee. Passing through Kenosha and viewing those trackless trolleys amid the classic downtown buildings was always something special.



[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)

Tabone asked if extending rush-hour no-parking time or putting in no left turn prohibitions along Queen could help. Cameron said that while businesses might be impacted, "everyone needed to work for the same goal."

One of the improvements that has been put into effect about a week ago was the shift from schedule focused service to headway focus service. "People don't care if the car they get on is one scheduled or not. They just want one to be there within a reasonable amount of time," said Stambler.

This change, which is a major alteration in the way the routes are managed, will improve wait times and may help with short-turns. How much? Well one guess was that instead of wait times of 30 minutes, the headway might drop to 20.

Bussin told the TTC staff that just wasn't good enough. After all the schedule calls for service every six minutes. What more could they do, she asked, and brought up the option of splitting the route in two. Stambler said that many things were going to be tried, but the changes had to occur in a systematic way to understand what worked and what didn't. Splitting the route would only be attempted if it could be proved that it would help improve service – something he didn't have data on yet.

Bussin insisted that TTC riders needed better service sooner than later. Stambler countered that he believes that such the changes made already would make a very noticeable difference to customers.

Bussin will get to see the staff's final recommendations at the Jan. 23 meeting of the TTC Commission. The commission will be hearing depositions at 2 p.m. To get your name on the list contact [gso@ttc.ca](mailto:gso@ttc.ca).

## **AMT to Acquire 160 Double-Decker Cars**

Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT) applauds the Quebec government's decision to grant the necessary financing for the acquisition of 160 double-decker commuter train cars, which will enable significant service improvements throughout the metropolitan region's commuter train network.

These new cars will make it possible to boost capacity by 70 percent on the current network and inaugurate service on the future eastern train line.

This order consists of 30 multilevel cars for the Eastern Train and an option on a total of 130 additional cars, as stipulated in the request for proposals. This historic project represents the largest commuter train investment ever made in Quebec.

"For several years now, commuter trains have been the victims of their own success. Ridership continues to increase but trains are running at — or even above — capacity. This is a great day for AMT, and also for

commuter train users who will reap the benefits of these new modern, spacious and comfortable double-decker cars starting in fall 2009. I would personally like to thank commuter train users for their patience, which has been rewarded today," says Joël Gauthier, president and chief executive officer of AMT.



"Better service plus increased comfort equals a winning formula that I am certain will attract new users to public transit," adds Joël Gauthier.

### **Increasing service and renewing the fleet**

These 160 new cars will improve service quality by enabling the following:

- Increasing commuter train rush-hour capacity by 70 percent on all five commuter train lines (close to 45,000 additional rides each day);
- Implementing service on the eastern train line;
- Renewing a part of the current commuter train fleet, including some older cars ;
- Adding extra trains.

### **Modern, comfortable cars that are adapted to people with disabilities**

These new multilevel cars offer cutting-edge technology and improved comfort to commuter train users. Each of the 160 cars will be equipped with 142 ergonomic seats, a roomy intermediate level between the two decks (with benches), bicycle spaces, and an audio-visual information system provided with intercoms connecting the passengers to the train crew. Each train will be equipped with a composting toilet in the control-cab cars. Furthermore, all cars will be fully accessible to people with disabilities.

These cars will be commissioned progressively starting in the fall of 2009. The cars will be gradually put into service on the future Eastern Train line and on the five existing lines (Dorion-Rigaud, Blainville-Saint-Jérôme, Deux-Montagnes, Mont-Saint-Hilaire and Delson-Candiac).

### **Fact sheet**

160 new double-decker commuter train cars

### **Car features**

- Stainless steel multilevel cars built by Bombardier Transportation
- Unique design allows trains to travel through the Mount-Royal Tunnel
- High capacity: 142 ergonomic seats and total capacity for up to 200 users
- Cars are fully accessible to people with disabilities
- Compositing toilets in each train (located in control-cab car)
- Bicycle spaces located in the intermediate level
- Audio-visual information system provided with intercoms connecting the passengers to the train crew
- Roomy intermediate level with benches located between the two decks

#### **Delivery and commissioning**

- Cars will be delivered and commissioned progressively between fall 2009 and spring 2011
- 30 cars will be put into service on the future eastern train line
- 130 cars will be introduced gradually on the Dorion-Rigaud, Blainville-Saint-Jérôme, Deux-Montagnes, Delson-Candiac and Mont-Saint-Hilaire lines

#### **Improved service and renewal of the fleet**

- Rush-hour commuter train capacity will increase by 70 percent on all five lines (close to 43,000 additional rides daily)
- Eastern train will be put into service
- A part of the current commuter train fleet will be renewed, including some older cars

## **Greene Coach goes greener with two 2008 Cummins-powered MCI® J4500 coaches**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — December 10, 2007 —**

Embracing clean-diesel coaches and living up to its name, Greene Coach of Greeneville, Tennessee, will take delivery of two 2008 J4500 models in December. Greene's new J4500s are MCI's first to feature the low-emission Cummins ISM engine paired with an Allison B500 transmission.

"We have been running coaches with Cummins engines since 1998 with no problems," said Russell Ooten,

president of Greene Coach. "We get great fuel economy with these engines, and I find that they are quieter." MCI added Cummins ISM engines to its powertrain option lineup as it launched its models that complied with the EPA's 2007 clean-diesel engine mandate. Based on its findings, MCI expects the Cummins ISM to continue to deliver outstanding fuel economy and lower operating costs because of the engine's simplified design and longer maintenance intervals. "It is an installation- and service-friendly engine," said Paul Fazio, MCI's powertrain system manager. MCI has already delivered dozens of D4500 and D4505 models featuring the Cummins-Allison powertrain combination.



Founded in 1945, Greene Coach is the oldest private tour and charter operator in Tennessee. Ooten's father, Kenneth, worked there and bought the company in 1948, leading it until Ooten and his wife, Sheila, purchased the company in 1991. "My dad was a pioneer in the industry; he was very dedicated and enjoyed it. You have to, because it has so many challenges."

Greene, the 2003 recipient of the prestigious United Motorcoach Association Vision Award, has a reputation for high-quality service, offering charter and tour packages throughout the Southeastern U.S. The company's new J4500s also feature a six-screen video entertainment system by Blaupunkt, and Firestone tires. The coaches' exterior graphics were designed by MCI and are factory installed. "Our customers like the J4500. It's a good coach with a lot of curbside appeal," said Ooten, who operates a fleet of 11 motor coaches, including six J4500s.

## **Fun Tours takes delivery of two MCI® D4505 coaches, enhancing its quality fleet**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — December 17, 2007 —** Fun Tours, based in Virginia Beach, Virginia, recently took delivery of two 55-passenger D4505 coaches, noting the model's modern look, top-quality build and simplicity of design.



Both coaches feature a Caterpillar C-13 engine, lavatory, Amaya Brasil seating and a Blaupunkt entertainment system with six 15" LCD monitors. One coach includes a ZF ASTronic Transmission and the other, a B500 Allison Transmission.

"We like the service life, durability and reliability of the D Model," says Charles Elmore, Fun Tours vice president.

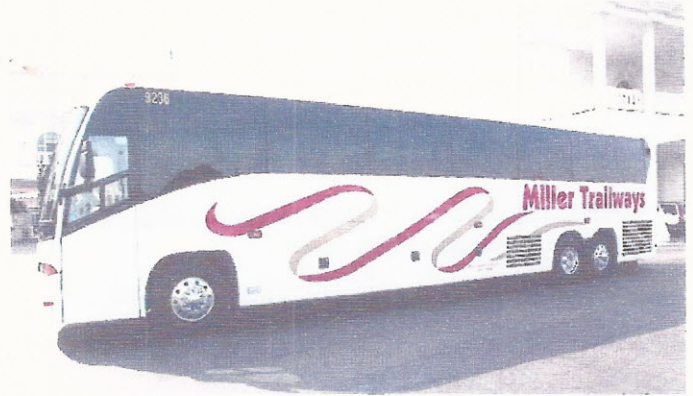
"We offer our customers a high quality fleet, including late-model coaches with upgraded seating and amenities. Our coaches are inspected and maintained on a regular basis to ensure safety and reliability for our customers."

Fun Tours organizes more than 600 tours each year for 165 different groups and operates a fleet of 16 motor coaches, 15 of which are MCI models. Fun Tours is a member of the American Bus Association, United Motorcoach Association and the Virginia Motorcoach Association. For more information, visit [www.fun-toursinc.com](http://www.fun-toursinc.com).

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

## Miller Transportation gets new clean-diesel J4500, praises MCI's Fast-Track program

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — December 14, 2007** — Miller Transportation, an established motor coach company serving Kentucky and Indiana, has taken delivery of a fast-track MCI® J4500. The new coach, equipped with a 2007 Detroit Diesel and Allison Transmission powertrain, is the first coach in the company's 65-coach fleet to feature the new clean-diesel, low-emission technology. The coach will be placed into a new commuter express route operated on behalf of local transit authority IndyGo, which has been very successful in its launching of commuter coach services.



Miller purchased the coach during MCI's Fast-Track promotion, which offered \$6,000 in "Green Bucks" credit for eligible coaches bought by December 15. Fast Track is MCI's in-stock program, which allows customers to take near-immediate delivery of ready-built coaches, mostly the top-selling J4500 and D4500. Equipped with popular options, Fast-Track coaches come in a variety of powertrain combinations to give operators choice.

"MCI's fast-track program has been a blessing for our business," said John Miller, president of Miller Transportation, which bought seven fast-track J4500 coaches in the fall, meeting the requirements of the transit agency's bid. "When the bid requirements for the commuter service were issued, it required bidders to have seven ADA lift-enabled, late-model motor coaches on hand. I contacted all the manufacturers, and only MCI could deliver the units before the deadline."

In October, IndyGo launched the first of three planned commuter express routes in Indiana's Hamilton County with federal grant money intended to reduce car traffic and air pollution. According to the Indianapolis Star, the initial route has surpassed expectations with 11,000 more riders than anticipated. "As the service expands, we plan to add more J4500s through the fast-track program," said Miller.

Miller Transportation was founded with a single school bus in 1937 by Emmett Miller Sr. to serve children from Louisville's outlying farming communities. Today, under a third generation of family leadership, Miller Transportation operates in Louisville (under Miller Trailways) and Indianapolis. Miller entered the Indianapolis market five years ago and has been growing since. Of its 65 coaches, nine of them MCI J4500s, 30 operate from Indianapolis. The company also runs 75 school buses, 30 of which are based in Indianapolis. For more information visit [www.millertransportation.com](http://www.millertransportation.com).

## Brazos Valley Travel first in Texas to take delivery of two '08 MCI® J4500 coaches

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — November 28, 2007** — Brazos Valley Travel, based in Waco, Texas, is the first Texas

operator to run J4500 model coaches with EPA compliant engines. Brazos' new J4500 coaches, equipped with clean-diesel, low emission Caterpillar C-13 engines and ZF ASTronic transmissions, already have over 24,000 miles on them and are showing great results.

"I take the environmental issue seriously," said Bobby Safley, Brazos Valley Travel owner. "My business plan includes updating our entire fleet to MCI low emission coach models within one year. To reduce our current carbon footprint, we are diligent about completing all regularly scheduled maintenance, such as oil changes and air filter replacements."



"We are traveling throughout the United States and Canada in these coaches and running them is a breeze. We have not had any problems finding ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel, or managing the regeneration process. We are experiencing a consistent increase in fuel mileage."

Safley also attributes the better fuel mileage to the SmarTire™ feature. The system, which measures both the temperature and air pressure of each of the coach's tires, continuously monitors and maintains consistent tire pressure to help improve fuel mileage and prevent abnormal tire wear. SmarTire also includes an early warning system to help avoid "down time" on the road. All future Brazos coach purchases will include the SmarTire feature.

The new Brazos coaches also feature a Blaupunkt entertainment system with 6, 15" LCD monitors, and Amaya Brasil seats.

Brazos currently operates a fleet of five motor coaches. The business plan calls for the addition of one more coach and updates to the older coaches for a total of six MCI J4500 EPA compliant models by December 2008. Brazos transports U.S. Military personnel, school children, college students and senior adult tours. For more information, visit [www.brazosvalleybus.com](http://www.brazosvalleybus.com).

## New York City and Ottawa Place Orders for 1,052 Orion VII Next

## Generation Diesel-Electric Hybrid Transit Buses

**Mississauga, Ontario (December 17, 2007)** – Daimler Buses North America has received orders totaling 1,052 Orion VII Next Generation diesel-electric hybrid transit buses from some of North America's largest transit authorities. MTA New York City Transit and the City of Ottawa (OC Transpo) have ordered Orion VII Next Generation diesel-electric hybrid transit buses powered by BAE Systems' HybriDrive® diesel-electric hybrid propulsion system for delivery into 2010.

"Daimler is focused on shaping the future of transportation through initiatives for greater fuel economy and lower emissions in commercial vehicles," said Andreas Renschler, Member of the Board of Management of Daimler AG and Head of Daimler Trucks Division. "In North America, when conditions are right with public-private partnerships, hybrid vehicles have proven to be an ideal solution in today's world."

- MTA New York City Transit and the MTA Bus Company will take delivery of 850 Orion VII Next Generation diesel-electric hybrid transit buses by early 2010. This order will bring the MTA's diesel-electric hybrid bus fleet to almost 1,700 units, making it the largest diesel-electric hybrid fleet in the world. With this order, Orion brand transit buses will account for almost 50-percent of MTA New York City Transit's entire fleet.

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- OC Transpo has ordered up to 202 Orion VII Next Generation hybrid diesel-electric hybrid transit buses to be delivered by 2010. This delivery will make OC Transpo the third largest hybrid bus fleet in Canada.

The Orion VII Next Generation diesel-electric hybrid transit buses from Daimler are powered by BAE Systems' HybriDrive® propulsion system. A majority of the deliveries previously mentioned will incorporate lithium-ion battery technology. 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.

"Orion has solidified itself as the leading manufacturer of diesel-electric hybrid transit buses in North America," said Dr. Andreas Strecker, President and CEO of Daimler Buses North America. "As a manufacturer,

employer and corporate citizen, it gives us great satisfaction to contribute to energy efficiency and emissions reductions in the cities and communities we are operating in. Further, we are extremely pleased with these new orders and the confidence our customers have in our products and our company. We look forward to delivering these new buses in the coming months."



#### **About MTA New York City Transit & MTA Bus:**

MTA New York City Transit is a public authority in New York that operates public transportation in New York City. MTA New York City Transit operates more buses than any other public agency in North America.

#### **About OC Transpo:**

Public transit services in the City of Ottawa are provided by OC Transpo, which now serves a population of over 870,000. OC Transpo's growing Ridership is approaching 100 million rides annually.

## **Great Service Leads Alliance Bus Charters to Purchase Four Setra S 417 Motorcoaches**

**Greensboro, N.C. (December 11, 2007)** – Alliance Bus Charters, located in Haslet, Tex., recently purchased its first new Setra S 417, along with three pre-owned Setra S 417 motorcoaches from Daimler Buses North America.



"This is my very first experience with Daimler and the Setra brand," said Rick Bastow, President of Alliance Bus Charters. "I have been in the bus business for more than 30 years and I can not remember a time that I have been treated this good from all the staff, and not just the sales people."

Alliance Bus Charters, located in Haslet, TX, is a charter-based tour company, serving all of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Alliance's large fleet of late model Setra buses is the areas first. This makes the company stand out as one of the premier companies in the Metroplex. Alliance Bus Charters believes in offering its drivers top pay and only employs the safest and most courteous drivers. "Daimler has earned my business," added Bastow. "I would recommend Setra motorcoaches to anyone who is not happy with his or her current motorcoach company, or the lack of customer service."

The sales organization for Daimler offers customers with both new and pre-owned motorcoach options. Daimler's pre-owned motorcoach sales force is poised to locate a motorcoach perfect for every need, with an extensive selection of quality, pre-owned motorcoaches.

"We are committed to providing our customers with a level of responsiveness rarely experienced anywhere else," said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America. "Our goal is to remain a committed partner, providing solid advice, support and real value for our customers from the start to finish."

## **Cities along rail line plan for big growth**

**Northstar's economic impact could be close to \$1 billion.**

By Paul Levy, Star Tribune

Last update: December 17, 2007 - 12:17 AM

Just south of the site of the future train station in Big Lake are hundreds of acres of potato fields and worlds of possibilities.

For Northstar commuters, this is the end of the line. For Big Lake and other stops along the line, it's just the beginning.

"There's so much potential here, now that Northstar has put Big Lake on everybody's radar screen," said Chuck Heitz, a Big Lake City Council member for 21 years who remembers when only 960 people lived in this city, 40 miles northwest of Minneapolis.

"In the spring, we're going to bring in developers, movers and shakers -- and I suspect the other Northstar cities with train stations are thinking of doing the same."

The cost to build the Northstar line is \$320 million.

But the economic impact of the line, scheduled to open 2009, on the region could actually be worth closer to \$1 billion.

Anoka County Administrator Steve Novak, a proponent of the line for a decade, envisions \$100 million developments in several of the cities with stations along the line. And those cities hope to lure business and build a tax base that will pay dividends for decades.

"These cities have the unique opportunity to generate economic growth," Sen. Norm Coleman said in a telephone interview last week from Washington. "This goes way beyond ridership."

In Fridley, where a mix of residential, commercial and industrial development already surround the train station site, developers are exploring ways to take advantage of new possibilities while businesses such as Medtronic contemplate shuttle lines to get train riders to and from work, said Scott Hickok, Fridley's community development director.

The Coon Rapids station site, tucked behind the Riverdale shopping center, is likely to attract new housing and, possibly, lure a major employer, said Coon Rapids City Manager Matt Fulton. Elk River and Anoka also are making plans.

All are eagerly awaiting the completion of the Twins' new ballpark and its downtown Minneapolis station that will connect the Northstar line to the Hiawatha light-rail line, allowing riders from Big Lake to connect to trains to the airport or the Mall of America. Eventually there will be extensions to St. Paul and Duluth "and most of this could take place in less than a decade," said Tim Yantos, executive director of the Northstar Corridor Development Authority and Anoka County Regional Rail Authority.

#### Big opportunities

But the most intriguing possibilities may be in Big Lake. The Sherburne County city of 9,200 was supposed to be just another whistle stop along a line expected to end in St. Cloud. Politics and economics cut the line in half, with Big Lake, for now, the final stop.

"The goal is to go to St. Cloud, but ending the line, for now, in Big Lake presents us with additional

opportunities," said Scott Johnson, Big Lake city administrator.

Even with the additional population of 8,000 living in neighboring Big Lake Township, Big Lake was never considered a Northstar destination point for commuters who live outside of this part-rural, part-suburban community.

That changed when it became one of the line's end points. If people from St. Cloud want to commute by rail to Minneapolis, they'll drive to and from Big Lake.

But Big Lake also wants to lure folks from the Twin Cities and from beyond St. Cloud. Heitz, head of Big Lake's Transit Oriented Development Committee, talks about the city's extensive parks and trail system, of the chance to play a round of golf -- with a cart -- for only \$25, of the gorgeous lake two miles from the train station, a short shuttle ride away.

He said the family that owns the potato fields has already told city officials that the farmland can be purchased. Already he envisions a retail market to the south of the station, with a smattering of retail along Hwy. 10, to the north.

A planning specialist -- Steve Gritman of Northwest Associated Consultants of Golden Valley -- was brought on board nearly two years ago by Big Lake. He looks at the hundreds of acres of available flatland and sees "opportunities that aren't even perceived" by Big Lake residents.

#### Building support

Getting the community to come on board may take time. A Nov. 20 open meeting at City Hall attracted only a half-dozen citizens, said Katie Larson, Big Lake's senior city planner. But after last week's authorization of federal funding of \$156.8 million -- which will pay for half of Northstar's expenses -- a meeting this Wednesday is hoped to draw a significant crowd.

"We're rural-suburban, not really one or the other, but somewhere in between," Larson said. "From my perspective, this is really exciting. For others, change can be difficult. I can appreciate that not everybody has come around yet."

If a change in attitude has not fully reached Big Lake, folks in Washington think Minnesotans who have yet to climb on board will fall in love with the trains.

Five years ago, potential riders focused on the environmental values of trains, Sen. Amy Klobuchar said in a phone interview from Washington. For a middle class struggling with gas prices, it's now an economic issue, she said.

"It's easier, cheaper, better than driving through congestion and parking," she said. "It's not a bad deal."

It's a great deal, say Northstar boosters like Heitz, who dreams of the day people will take a train from Big Lake to a Twins game, or to the Mall of America, for \$6.

"This," said Anoka County's Novak, "is only the beginning of a good story."

Paul Levy • 612-673-4419

## **Back-Seat Driver: RT may risk its budget in railyard**

By Tony Bizjak - tbizjak@sacbee.com

Waiting for a light rail line to Sacramento airport has been like waiting for Godot – a lot of talk and angst, but no sign of a train.

At the Regional Transit bus and rail service, they've waited years for the federal government to vet and fund the project.

Now, RT is hatching a plan to move ahead with its own money and quickly build the first mile of the line – maybe within two years.

It'll cost an estimated \$37 million, which amounts to nearly all that RT has coming to it from the county's transportation sales tax renewal, known as Measure A.

A mile is not far. It would extend the line from its current end point at the downtown train depot – Fifth and H streets – north to the corner of Seventh Street and Richards Boulevard.

It doesn't get light rail across the American River, into the neighborhoods of South and North Natomas.

To get across the river, the agency will have to get in line again for federal funds.

The agency also will have to restate its case locally as well. Environmentalists say they don't like the idea of another bridge over the American River Parkway, and more than a few South Natomas residents don't want what they believe are troublesome trains on congested Truxel Road.

If RT manages to finance the first mile by 2010, it is likely to be as clear as light rail's see-through windows that the initial trains carry embarrassingly few riders. Nobody lives along that mile yet.

But that's OK, agency officials say.

That mile should have an interesting future. It runs through the heart of the downtown railyard and ends in the Richards Boulevard area just to the north. Sacramento planners are talking about turning those areas into urban villages where tens of thousands of people might live by 2030. The future population in those

two areas could match Sacramento's current central city population.

An initial clump of 2,300 apartments and condos off Richards Boulevard is scheduled to be under construction at the same time as the light rail line construction.

RT runs another risk by building that first mile. Its budget is tight. The worsening state budget crisis could make money matters even worse for RT. Agency officials acknowledge they may have a hard time paying the annual operating costs of the new line for a few years.

So, RT hopes the public will step in to help. Agency officials are pushing for a ballot measure asking Sacramento County voters for possibly a 1/4-cent or 1/2-cent increase to the county sales tax. Half the money would go to RT, half to road maintenance agencies to fix city and county streets.

Key regional transportation planners back the plan, in principle. But some worry voters will say no.

So, why is RT willing to push itself to the financial edge for a train system many commuters currently disdain?

The answer, rail supporters say, is that RT isn't building for today. Traffic on Interstate 5 over the American River is heading toward horrible. Light rail would be an alternative around that mess for commuters between Natomas and downtown, and for airport travelers.

Why not express buses through Natomas, at least as a stop-gap? RT board member Patrick Hume of Elk Grove asked last week.

RT interim head Mike Wiley said even a "conga line" of buses won't be adequate to meet the long-term ridership demand over the river. Besides he said, the RT board a few years ago researched the question and decided: In Natomas, the future is light rail.

## **CATS tries to cut lines at I-485 station**

**Ticket machines to be added and officials hope to speed them up**

STEVE HARRISON sharrison@charlotteobserver.com

**Charlotte** -To shorten long lines of people waiting to buy light-rail tickets before big events such as Carolina Panthers games, CATS is installing two new ticket vending machines at the Interstate 485/South Boulevard station.

The transit agency also plans to install a pre-fabricated ticket booth staffed by a transit official, who can answer questions and sell tickets manually.

It hopes to have them ready for New Year's Eve.

The Lynx Blue Line has been operating for nearly a month, and has been mostly glitch-free. One nagging problem, however, has been with the ticket machines.

In the first two weeks of operation, many of the machines were broken. CATS chief executive Ron Tober, who retired Friday, said that problem has been fixed by the vendor, Ascom, though he's still concerned that it takes too long for the machines to dispense tickets.

"We're still questioning the transaction time," said Tober.

But what's been more difficult is for the line to handle hundreds of people in a very short time, for a Panthers or Charlotte Bobcats game. Passengers have become frustrated about waiting in line for several minutes to buy a ticket -- and having to do the same thing for their trip home because CATS doesn't sell a return ticket.

Tober said CATS is researching how it can sell a return ticket, and hopes to have one available in the first half of 2008.

CATS has a total of 36 ticket vending machines, though three are currently spares. Tober said two of the spares will be installed at the I-485/South Boulevard station, bringing the total number of machines there to five.

CATS said the train has handled more than 12,000 passenger trips since it opened to paying passengers Nov. 26. It estimated the train would average 9,100 weekday passenger trips in its first year.

CATS hasn't released a detailed breakdown of when people are riding the train, but has said that midday ridership is higher than it expected. More people are also riding the train for events uptown, for sports and cultural events.

Tober said other changes could be coming to the rail line.

- He said CATS is talking about offering later service Friday and Saturday night. The last train leaves the Seventh Street station uptown at 1 a.m. but stops at the Scaleybark station, about halfway down the line.

Tober said CATS is considering having a train leave uptown at 1:30 a.m. and go to the end of the line, at I-485/South Boulevard.

"We can't run all night," he said. "We have to maintain the line."

- Higher-than-expected midday ridership has transit officials considering whether to use two-car trains during

the day. The Lynx Blue Line alternates one-car and two-car trains during rush hour, but then uses only one-car trains in the middle of the day.

Tober said CATS also could increase frequencies during the middle of the day, to a train every 12 minutes. Trains run every 7 1/2 minutes during rush hour, and then only 15 minutes during the day.

- The Scaleybark park-and-ride lot should be open by New Year's Eve, Tober said. CATS is waiting on Mecklenburg County giving the lot a certificate of occupancy.

That parking lot will have 315 spaces.

Future changes to the rail line will be made by new CATS chief executive Keith Parker, a former assistant city manager.

## Happy trolley days on centennial

By MARK MOREY  
YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

With a bump and a lurch, a historic streetcar trip got under way Saturday in Yakima. Thanks to the age of the tracks, the ride was probably rougher than that experienced by a carload of trolley officials and dignitaries a century ago.

But the symbolism was important as Yakima Valley Trolleys celebrated the centennial of the only surviving interurban electric streetcar system in the United States.



ANDY SAWYER/Yakima Herald-Republic

Passengers climb aboard a trolley car for a ride to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Yakima's trolley system on Saturday. The run was a re-enactment of the first trolley run in 1907, and riders were charged the same fare as then: a nickel.

On board for Saturday's first short jaunt from the trolley barn at Third Avenue and Pine Street were about 30 elected officials, members of the current trolley board and a few descendants of the original board members. Newspaper accounts show that those first riders smoked cigars to celebrate their success at launching the line,

but foil-wrapped chocolate versions had to suffice for Saturday's trip.

The centennial opened with a series of speakers recounting the history of the line, which offered its first public rides on Christmas Day in 1907.

Ken Johnsen, president of Yakima Valley Trolleys, told the audience before the ride that the trolley was considered the most technologically advanced thing in Yakima at the time.

The first riders had to stand in the mud to board, Johnsen said.

"They were so proud about what had come to pass they didn't care about that," he said.

Other speakers told the crowd, estimated at 200 folks, that they valued the fact that this piece of the city's history had been preserved.

"It's a local treasure," said Mayor Dave Edler.

Larry Perrigo, a volunteer motorman, played the part of Yakima Valley settler A.J. Splawn, who served as president of the first trolley board and was later elected mayor of North Yakima. Splawn's son, 97-year-old Homer Splawn, attended the ceremony but did not ride on the trolley.

Splawn said later that he recalled riding the trolley during first grade and sometimes heard that pranksters would put soap on the tracks to cause the wheels to slip.

"I remember hearing about that. I didn't do it, because I didn't live in town," Splawn said.

Other descendants of original riders on board the first trip included Robert Rankin, whose father was businessman George Rankin; Pres Tuesley, whose father, George Tuesley, was publisher of the Yakima Morning Herald; and Dan A. McDonald, whose father was Dan McDonald, another early settler of the Valley.

Tuesley said he had only ridden the trolley once or twice but appreciated that the current-day volunteers had maintained the line.

After the initial carload of dignitaries, trolley operators spent a few hours shuttling riders a few blocks down the tracks and back. Riders only had to pay a nickel, which was the fare during the first excursion in 1907.

The trolley regularly operates on summer weekends and can be chartered for special trips. The tracks at one time stretched for 44 miles out to Wiley City and north of Selah, carrying passengers and freight.

The current active tracks cover only a few miles, but trolley supporters are looking forward to future expansion within Yakima.

## Everett streetcar could work, but would be spendy

By David Chircop Herald Writer

**EVERETT** -- Imagine 10 years from now a new University of Washington campus at Everett Station linked by a streetcar line to a thriving downtown with shops, condos and restaurants.

Now picture that line continuing north to Everett Community College or the waterfront, then south to a bustling new neighborhood on the Snohomish River with even more condos and houses, a movie theater and city park.

It could happen, says Tom Brennan, with Nelson-Nygaard, the consulting company that conducted a yearlong streetcar feasibility study for Everett that was released last week.

But it will cost.

The first 11/2 mile leg of the route alone is expected to cost about \$54 million. Add about 3 miles of north and south spurs, right-of-way, vehicle and maintenance costs and the price tag swells to more than \$131 million.

That doesn't include the \$6 million to \$9 million it would cost to run the street car system every year.

The cost would require selling bonds and raising sales taxes as well as collecting money from special assessment and parking districts.

Different cities use a hodgepodge of methods to pay for streetcars, ranging from paying the entire cost out of the city's general fund in Charlotte, N.C., to cobbling more than a half dozen state, federal, county and city funding sources for Portland, Ore.'s proposed eastside line.

The new study looks at Everett's specific geography and draws construction and funding examples set by Portland, Tacoma and Seattle, which celebrated the maiden voyage of its South Lake Union Streetcar a week ago.

"The streetcar is really the mode that you're looking for," Brennan said.

The consultant's study, which included engineering work, financial number crunching and meetings with property owners along the route, found streetcars are feasible in Everett.

That's good news for rail advocates, because the city previously considered resurrecting replica trolley buses, a tourist attraction once used in Everett or adding a trainlike bus downtown.

Streetcars are better than buses because they attract up to 60 percent more riders, seem to encourage quality urban development and open door for creative funding strategies, Brennan said.

Portland, for example, has seen more than \$3 billion in development along its streetcar line since it opened in 2001, including about 6,000 residential units and 4 million square feet of commercial space, according to the Nelson-Nygaard study.

The city also paid for 30 percent of its capital costs with bonds that will be paid back from revenue collected in a special taxing district, which charges a variable fee to property owners in a three block radius of the route.

When Tacoma replaced an existing bus line with streetcars, it saw a 500 percent spike in ridership, Everett's consultant said.

While some stakeholders and city officials are gung-ho about the prospect, it's not yet clear to what extent property owners along the proposed routes are willing to chip in for the steep initial cost of a streetcar system.

If the city pursues its streetcar dream it will quickly have to figure out how to pay for it, said Chris Zahas, of Leland Consulting Group of Portland, which also worked on the study \$113,000 feasibility study.

"Planning for something like this doesn't make sense unless you can pay for it," Zahas said.

*Reporter David Chircop: 425-339-3429 or dchircop@heraldnet.com.*

## Dade officials plan to open three routes in next 9 years

By BOB McCCLURE

Article published on Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2007

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY - Light rail is nothing new to the state of Florida.

In 1960, the Florida Legislature created the Miami-Dade Transit Authority and from those humble beginnings came a series of transportation improvements in South Florida, including implementation of Miami's Metrorail system in 1984 at a cost of \$1.03 billion.

The 22.4-mile light rail line stretches northeast from Kendall to Coral Gables, downtown Miami, north to the airport and west through Hialeah with connections to Broward and Palm Beach counties at a Tri-Rail/Metrorail transfer station.

Most of the system runs on elevated tracks, with 22 stations about a mile apart. Parking is available at 19 of the stations, including the new Palmetto station that opened in 2003.

The line has a fleet of 136 cars with a capacity of 164 passengers each. They operate at a top speed of 58 mph and an average speed of 31 mph. The fare is \$1.50.

But like most rapid transit systems in the nation, it doesn't make money and is underwritten by the U.S. Department of Transportation. In 2006, the line had an operations budget of \$41.3 million and revenue of \$17.2 million.

According to Miami-Dade Transit, Metrorail averages 58,630 daily boardings and for fiscal year 2005 the total was 17.1 million.

That number is sure to increase with the opening of three new routes over the next nine years.

Construction is currently under way on a 2.4-mile extension from Earlington Heights to Miami International Airport, scheduled for completion in 2010. The next phase will be a 9.5-mile link into Opa-Locka, Dolphin Stadium and the Calder Race Course, which is targeted for completion in 2014. Another phase, a 10.6-mile east-west extension, is targeted to open in 2016.

Around the rest of the Sunshine State, other similar initiatives are beginning to take shape.

In addition to the recent formation of the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority, which plans light rail lines in Pinellas and other counties, other concepts are in motion around Orlando and Jacksonville.

Osceola County recently joined Orlando in support of the 61.5-mile Central Florida Commuter Rail project that will link Osceola, Orange, Seminole and Volusia counties.

Estimated cost of the project is \$615 million. Backers say federal funds would cover about half of the cost and state money about 25 percent. Orlando and the four counties would pick up the additional \$154 million. Local funding would likely include a portion of the gas tax along with future property tax revenue or a possible mass-transit tax.

Jacksonville has built the 2.5-mile Skyway, a fully automated electric-operated transit system on an elevated dual guideway, with parking at several stations.

Nine two-car trains take commuters to eight stations on both sides of the St. Johns River in the central business district.

Approximately 3,500 spaces are available to commuters for monthly parking. Nearly 1,000 spaces are located in and around the Skyway Convention Center Station. The fare is 35 cents.

Around the nation, among the systems getting the most

attention are in Denver and Seattle.

Denver's Regional Transportation District light rail system opened in 1994 with a 5.3-mile section through downtown Denver. In July 2000, another 8.7-mile section extended the line to Littleton and a new 19-mile extension was opened a year ago, connecting Denver's central business district with the Denver Tech Center.

At a cost of about \$880 million, the 19-mile line, with 13 stations and 7,500 new parking spaces, works out to about \$46 million per mile.

In 2004, Denver voters passed the RTD's FasTracks plan, which provides \$6.1 billion to build out the city's mass transit system by 2016. When completed Denver will rank among the top five regions in the nation for miles of fixed rail.

Funding comes from U.S. Department of Transportation grants and a sales tax of 0.4 percent on purchases of \$10 or more.

In Seattle, construction is under way on the city's Link light rail line.

The 15.6-mile line is expected to open in late 2009 from Sea-Tac Airport north to the Westlake Station in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel at a cost of \$2.4 billion. A 3.15-mile link north to the University of Washington and Husky Stadium is expected to open in 2016.

The line is being funded by local taxes, federal grants and bonds. Local taxes are a 0.3 percent motor vehicle excise tax and a 0.4 percent sales tax.

Article published on Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2007

## **Boston: Mattapan-Ashmont High Speed trolley line re-opens**

After an 18-month makeover, Boston's venerable High Speed trolley line connecting the southern suburbs of Mattapan and Ashmont re-opened for public service on December 22nd. Boston's Mattapan-Ashmont trolley line and the 15-Girard line in Philadelphia are the last "legacy" US light rail transit (LRT) lines still operating Art Deco-era PCC streetcars in regular scheduled service.

(The Presidents Conference Committee or PCC car – see photo further below – was the high-performance streetcar designed by a committee established by transit company top managers in the 1930s, and subsequently licensed to a number of streetcar manufacturers in the USA and abroad, where they were produced in the thousands, mainly in the 1940s and 1950s. Today, PCCs are also operated on San Francisco's F-Line, and

in Kenosha, Wisconsin, but these are more recently installed heritage streetcar systems.)

Communities surrounding the Mattapan-Ashmont route have been clamoring for restoration of the rail service. As an article on the NYCSUBWAY.org website relates, the Mattapan-Ashmont line "was built on a railroad right of way to help speed trolley cars into Boston from the Dorchester area. At only 2.2 miles the line is one of the shortest existing trolley lines, but it is surprisingly scenic considering its location on the border of a major city."

The major function of the line is to serve as a feeder to the major Red Line rapid transit station at Ashmont. Besides its termini at Mattapan and Ashmont, the line has 6 intermediate stops – for a total of 8 stations.

In June 2006, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) suspended service on the Mattapan-Ashmont High Speed Line to facilitate "the complete reconstruction of the terminals at Ashmont and Mattapan, which both date from the late 1920s", according to an article on the Railroad.net website (December 2002, updated June 2006).

Another goal of the project is to remove and reconstruct the viaduct ramp that allows the trolley line to cross over the Red Line rapid transit at Ashmont. The six intermediate stations will also receive minor repairs and cleaning.



*Boston's Mattapan-Ashmont line runs refurbished PCC streetcars, still performing well after many decades of use.  
[Photo: MBTA]*

While the line was still closed for rehab, an article in the *Weekly Dig* (Boston-area "alternative" paper, 23 Aug. 2007) additionally noted that the PCCs were being retrofitted with air conditioning, and many of the electric poles supporting the overhead contact system (OCS) were being replaced.

The paper also reported that In lieu of the PCC trolleys, "the T has been running a temporary 'trolley shuttle' (an MBTA bus)" As a result, "Neighbors have become disgruntled; some worry that the 'temporary shutdown' might become permanent." Fortunately, it now appears that these fears have come to naught.

The *Dig* also notes strong community loyalty to the trolley service, with persistent resistance to MBTA efforts to replace it with a "heavy" rapid transit Red Line extension (1960s) and then with buses (1981). The issue arose again, says the paper, when,

In the 1990s, the agency again looked into possible alternatives to the high-speed line, including having a "guided busway" on the track bed, putting heavier cars on the tracks or abandoning the system entirely. All three times, the surrounding neighborhoods and the town of Milton protested vigorously, and the trolley line was preserved.

Another reason the Mattapan-Ashmont line has endured as a trolley operation, the *Weekly Dig* relates, is the very durability of the PCC cars themselves: "Despite their considerable age, the PCCs are still efficient and cost-effective" writes the paper.

"The line tends to work better with those cars than the modern equipment" says Gerry O'Regan, treasurer of the Boston Street Railway Association (BSRA).

As the *Dig* article goes on to note, "Without electronics or even much hardware, the PCCs are simple machines...." The PCC's control system, as Keith Miranda, the foreman in charge of the PCC rehab, described it, is extremely simple: "Just an on/off switch with a bunch of resistors in the middle." Thus, adds the *Dig*, "They're easy to maintain and cheap to fix. More than anything, this is probably the key to their continued survival."

The article continues with an additional explanation of the advantage of PCCs:

"The primary reason the PCCs have survived at Mattapan is the infrastructure of the line itself," says Jonathan Belcher, a railfan and transit historian. "Modern light-rail vehicles, like those on the Green Line, draw more power than PCCs, so they need a more elaborate power distribution system. They weigh more than PCCs, so bridges on the line would need to be beefed up to handle newer cars. They require more sophisticated maintenance facilities than PCCs, so even more capital would have to be spent upgrading the repair facilities at Mattapan to handle newer cars. So far, it has remained more cost effective to keep on rebuilding the PCC cars than to make all of the other changes necessary to operate newer cars."

In other words, the 60-year-old PCCs are in many ways better and cheaper than any other alternative. That's a fact the entire MBTA should notice, O'Regan says, because it's true system-wide.

"They step away from the original designs, and the transit service gets worse," he says. "If they had left what they had in place, it would still be working today."

Be that as it may, fans of the Mattapan-Ashmont High Speed trolley line are joyous that the service has resumed. "The MBTA is making like Santa Claus ..." writes Caroline Roberts in the *Bostonist* alternative

publication. "Now they've announced that the trolley between the Ashmont and Mattapan stops is back in business."

## Salt Lake City: First FrontRunner train makes test run

Yet another new rail transit service is heading toward startup. The Salt Lake City-area FrontRunner regional passenger rail (RPR, "commuter rail") service is on schedule for launch in the spring of 2008 by the Utah Transit Authority (UTA), to run initially from Salt Lake City to the exurb of Pleasant View in Weber County (just north of Ogden).

On 25 October 2007, according to a report from KUTV-TV News, a FrontRunner train made its first run to demonstrate how the rail service will carry passengers from Weber County to Salt Lake City "when it opens to the public in a few months." UTA allowed members of the media, various public officials, and members of the community to ride three Bombardier-built bi-level (double-decker) RPR coaches on a 15-mile trek between the exurbs of Woods Cross and Kaysville before returning to Woods Cross, reaching a top speed of 79 miles per hour during the initial run.



Salt Lake-area civic leaders, community leaders, and media representatives board FrontRunner train for special demonstration trip in October 2007.

[Photo: Jeffrey Allred]

FrontRunner trains feature a variety of amenities, including on-board restrooms and Wi-Fi Internet service (available at no cost). UTA plans to operate FrontRunner trains every 30 minutes between 05:00 and 23:00 Monday-Friday; and 07:30 to 23:00 on Saturday (with no service on Sundays).

UTA plans to begin operating the full 44-mile FrontRunner line by November 2008 (see map below). By 2025, the agency projects weekday ridership of 12,500.

Per the agency's Full Funding Grant Agreement with the US Department of Transportation, capital investment cost of the FrontRunner project is \$489 million – calculating to about \$11 million per mile.

Interconnectivity is a key aspect of the design of FrontRunner. UTA's Intermodal Hub, located behind the Union Pacific main station on Rio Grande Street (just south of the Gateway), will serve as the main transfer station for commuters transferring between FrontRunner and UTA's Trax light rail transit system. "For example," notes the KUTV News report, "someone commuting from Weber County to downtown Salt Lake City will exit the FrontRunner train at the Intermodal Hub and board a Trax train that serves the downtown/University/Sandy area."

## Light rail to curb event traffic, crowds

**Phoenix** - Some of the Valley's biggest events are known as much for the crush of slow-moving people, cars and shuttle buses as they are for the actual event.

The Metro light-rail system promises to change that. A little-known feature of the 20-mile system is that it includes pockets of extra tracks where operators can store trains next to big events, and then bring the vehicles online as games or concerts let out.

Metro CEO Rick Simonetta explained that the system should quickly clear crowds out of events such as football games by running cars as often as every four minutes or so.

"The idea is to have a three-car train there — bam!" Simonetta said, smashing his hands together. "You fill it up."

Each set of trains carries 650 people, so Metro could move almost 4,000 people in roughly 15 minutes.

A key element of crowd control is quickly moving the first few thousand people at an event, Simonetta said, and the system is designed to do that.

The Metro line includes three storage spaces. Two small spaces hold a few trains in downtown Phoenix, near Chase Field and US Airways Center. The biggest storage track holds 10 cars, near Hayden Butte in Tempe.

Those cars can be deployed for events at Sun Devil Stadium, downtown festivals or gatherings at Tempe Town Lake. The city hosts numerous events that attract from 40,000 to more than 100,000. The fall and spring arts festivals downtown typically draw 250,000 people over a three-day span.

Some locals avoid big events because of heavy traffic, said Michael Martin, executive vice president of the Tempe Convention and Visitors Bureau. That could change, he said.

"It will probably help improve attendance numbers, particularly with those people who may have been weary in the first place," Martin said.

Event promoters could bring more events to the Valley if they see higher attendance numbers because of Metro, Martin said.

Tempe has decades of experience handling major events, but downtown streets can become overburdened even with the best of planning, said Jyme Sue McLaren, Tempe's deputy public works manager.

She expects Metro will speed trips even for those who drive to big events, because thousands who used to drive will take the train.

Metro officials have spent years working on how to serve big events, Simonetta said. They'll likely develop new ideas after working the first few events, he said, by seeing how crowds respond.

Many top Metro officials have experience with events at other transit systems for which they've worked. That includes Simonetta, who oversaw Atlanta's MARTA system during the 1996 Olympics. The system ran 24 hours a day for the Olympics and transported 20 to 25 percent of the eventgoers, he said.

The Metro system should handle as many as 100,000 passengers a day during events, Simonetta said.

By comparison, the average daily ridership is projected to be 26,000.

The first big event for Metro to handle will be its own opening on Dec. 27, 2008.

The \$1.4 billion system will be free the first Saturday and Sunday, and planners expect the event to draw 100,000 to 150,000 riders.

Simonetta said he's got bets going with two people that the Metro opening will lure more than 200,000 as Valley residents check out the new system and celebrations to mark its debut.

"This town loves special events," Simonetta said.

## Oceanside-to-Escondido VIP ride goes smoothly

By Michael Burge  
UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER  
December 29, 2007

North County Transit District showed off its new set of wheels yesterday. And those wheels were attached to a shiny new train described as the future backbone of public transit in North County.

The \$477 million Sprinter line is scheduled to begin carrying fare-paying passengers Jan. 13 between Oceanside and Escondido, but the district invited several

hundred people to ride the train along its 22-mile route for a ceremony celebrating the new service.

The Sprinter will provide the third branch of a regional mass-transit system envisioned for 30 years that includes the Coaster commuter train between Oceanside and downtown San Diego, and the San Diego Trolley.

At four minutes after noon yesterday, the doors swished closed on the gleaming new blue-and-teal Sprinter and the train eased from the Oceanside Transit Center station.

The two-car train stopped along the way to pick up invited guests at the Vista Transit Center and San Marcos Civic Center. When it broke through a banner stretched across the tracks at the Escondido Transit Center at 12:57 p.m., nearly all of its 272 seats were occupied.

The ride was a first for nearly every passenger, and received high marks.

"It's actually a little more comfortable and spacious than I thought it would be," said Rick Shea, a former Encinitas councilman.

As it cruised at its top speed of 55 mph, riders remarked that it seemed to be going much slower.

Coronado Councilman Phil Monroe said the Sprinter was more comfortable than the San Diego Trolley.

Sprinter vehicles are "diesel multiple units" – self-propelled cars that have two diesel engines under the passenger compartment.

Former Encinitas Councilwoman Christy Guerin commented on how quiet the ride was. "It's great to be able to carry on a conversation," she said.

The train's high point – figuratively and literally – arrives in San Marcos, where the tracks span state Route 78 at Woodland Parkway. The train bridge banks over the two levels, giving riders a thrill as they peer down on the traffic.

"It was really neat the way it tilted," said Jimmy Stocks, 12, son of Encinitas Mayor Jerome Stocks.

More than 700 people attended the ceremony in Escondido, hearing from a series of speakers – most of them associated with the Sprinter project built by the North County Transit District, which also operates the Coaster.

Transit district Executive Director Karen King acknowledged in her remarks that the project's cost increased from a budgeted \$352 million in 2003 to \$477 million today.

But, she said, "At \$21 million a mile – which is a lot of money out of my pocketbook – this is still the lowest-cost new-start project in the nation by far."

The project involved reconstructing a 22-mile freight track into a rail for both freight and passengers, building

a 1.7-mile loop to California State University San Marcos and adding 15 stations.



CHARLIE NEUMAN / Union-Tribune

North County Transit District's Sprinter train broke through a banner across the tracks at the Escondido Transit Center less than an hour after leaving the Oceanside Transit Center station.

At one point in her address, King directed everyone to look at the train behind her and could barely contain her satisfaction.

"I know every mother thinks their child is the most beautiful, but I'm telling you, this is the most beautiful train I've ever seen," she said, to applause.

Former Rep. Ron Packard, who was instrumental in securing \$152 million in federal funds for the project, recalled his early days on the North County Transit District board of directors in the 1970s, when the idea was floated to buy the Oceanside-to-Escondido rail line from its owner at the time, Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway.

After years of rebuffing the transit district's overtures, Santa Fe finally sold the tracks in 1992 as part of a package deal involving its Southern California network.

"I know we have naysayers. Some of them are here today," Packard said. "But I would venture to say that in 20 years from now you're going to... say it was a good thing to do."

County Supervisor Bill Horn, also a longtime transit district board member, recalled that he voted against the project early, but changed his mind.

"I think in five to 10 years from now you're going to be glad this is here," Horn said.

When it begins service next month, the Sprinter will leave every half-hour from each terminus, Oceanside and Escondido, placing four trains on the tracks at any time on weekdays. Trains will operate once an hour from each direction on weekends.

The fare will be \$2 one way, or \$4 for a day pass, which is the same as for a transit district bus.

Published: Friday, December 7, 2007

## Transit has Swift future in Snohomish County

Voters' rejection of last month's roads and transit measure sent regional planners back to the drawing board, but Snohomish County's two local transit agencies are rolling ahead with a potentially revolutionary improvement in bus service.

Community Transit and Everett Transit announced Wednesday that they'll work together to provide bus rapid transit service between Everett Station and Shoreline beginning in 2009. The route will follow the Highway 99 corridor from Pacific Avenue to Aurora Village, with new diesel-electric hybrid buses stopping at 15 new stations in each direction once every 10 minutes. Riders won't even need a schedule.

It'll operate with the regularity and predictability of train service, but you won't have to wait 20 years for tracks to be installed. Its success could lead to similar service on other major corridors in Snohomish County and beyond.

CT, which serves county residents outside the Everett city limits, has been planning its "Swift" service since 2005. The major news in Wednesday's announcement was the new partnership between CT and Everett Transit, a critical step in making Swift a reality and a hopeful sign that the two agencies have turned a positive corner after years of friction.

The agreement calls for CT to operate the service along the entire 16.7-mile route, including within the Everett city limits, and Everett will contribute a portion of its sales-tax revenue -- about \$1 million a year -- to the system. The city will also spend up to \$4 million to build Swift stations inside its borders and install equipment that will give Swift drivers limited control over traffic signals.

In addition, Everett Transit will take over some service just outside the city limits, including service between the Mukilteo ferry landing and the Boeing plant. The agencies have also agreed to negotiate better coordination of other services, including paratransit, commute trip reduction and after-hours customer service.

With talk of a merger off the table for now, close coordination and cooperation between CT and ET are essential. Wednesday's agreement is evidence that both agencies' leaders understand that, and are committed to removing any remaining barriers to efficient service. Taxpayers and transit customers should expect no less.

## Six more bus corridors get Government sanction

Amitabh Shukla, Hindustan Times  
Email\_Author

New Delhi, December 13, 2007

The Delhi government on Wednesday gave financial sanction to six new corridors of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), the new name given to the High Capacity Bus System (HCBS), amounting to Rs 1,820 crore. This is one of the highest ever amount given at one go for the improvement of the public transport system of the city.

The six corridors of BRT would come up even as massive traffic snarls have clogged the under construction route from Ambedkar Nagar to Moolchand. The death of a person in an accident in this stretch had led to a major uproar in the city. This had forced Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit to say that this was a "pilot project". However, the financial sanction given to the corridors now suggest that it is not a "pilot" project but a new mode of transport for the entire city.

After chairing a meeting of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) of Delhi Government, Finance Minister A.K. Walia said the combined route length of the six corridors would be 107 km and cover most of the geographical areas of the city. "This would be the modern and hi-tech alternative of the Blueline buses," Walia said. Transport Minister Haroon Yusuf was also present in the meeting.

Asked about the new corridors even as the debate on the usefulness of the controversial under construction corridor is not yet over, Yusuf said adequate arrangements have now been made in the stretch between Ambedkar Nagar to Moolchand so that there is no commuter inconvenience. "With this approval, the thrust will be on improvement of the public transport system. People who do not want to commute by private cars can now opt for the modern public transport system," said the Transport Minister.

Of the Rs 1,820 crore, the 8.8 km long Shastri Park-Karawal Nagar stretch would cost Rs 128.22 crores, the 27.75 km Moolchand-Jahangirpuri corridor Rs 346.12 crore and 15.70 km Kondli-Gokulpuri stretch would come up at a cost of Rs 360.33. The stretch of 26.60 km connecting Jamia Milia in south Delhi to Tilak Nagar in west Delhi would cost Rs 497.62 crores. The fifth corridor would be the 17.10 km long Nizamuddin-Nand Nagri stretch at Rs 376.64 crore and the sixth from Rajendra Nagar to Pragati Maidan with a cost of Rs 110.17 crore and having 10.8 kilometres.

Yusuf said that while five of the routes would be completed by the end of December 2009, the Moolchand-Jahangirpuri stretch would take April 2010 to get completed. "All the routes will be in place before the Commonwealth Games," the minister added.