

# Green Pennant Special

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

**MAY 2008**

**\$5.00**

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

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

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

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

## • MAY MEETING

The May meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on May 2, 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, "*Unfiled, Part 2*," will be a continuation of Chuck Tauscher's April slide presentation.

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

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

## CTA Updates Fleet with 150 Hybrid, 60-Foot Buses

3/6/2008

*Reassigned Contract Allows CTA to Save \$60,000 per Bus  
More Fuel-Efficient Buses Will Save Money*

The Chicago Transit Authority is moving ahead with plans to lease 150 articulated hybrid buses to replace buses purchased in 1991 and 1995. Today, the CTA finalized financing plans with Traxis Financial Group of New Haven, Connecticut. The terms of the agreement allow CTA to lease the buses for 12 years and retain ownership at the conclusion of the lease. CTA's lease cost will be approximately \$13.4 million per year. Leasing allows CTA to begin to take delivery of the buses later this year rather

than waiting until sufficient capital funds are available to purchase.



NEW FLYER

DE60LF



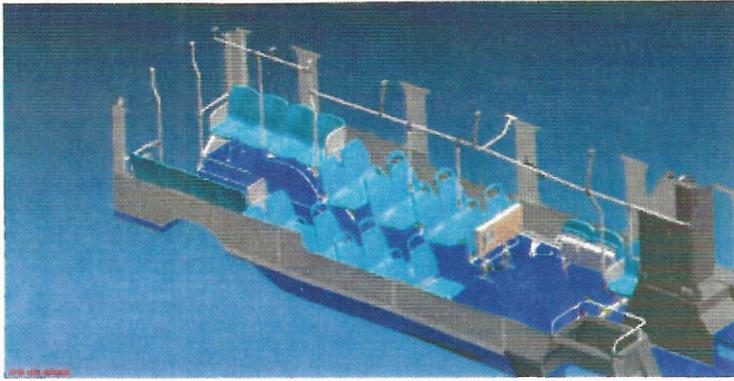
Delivery of the New Flyer Hybrid articulated buses will begin in August 2008.

In December, the Chicago Transit Board approved reassignment of a contract option from King County Metro, Seattle's public transit agency, for the 60-foot hybrid buses manufactured by New Flyer Industries.

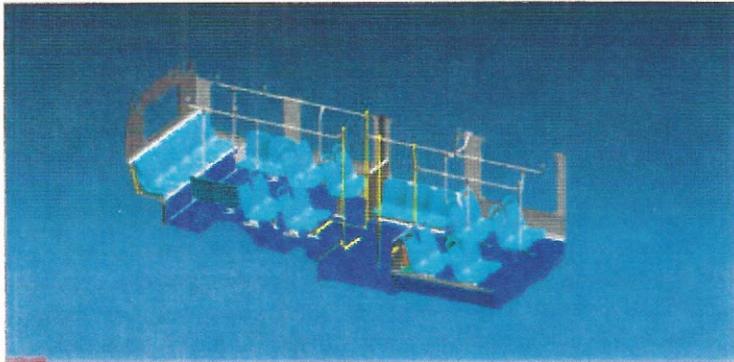
Assuming the last option of Seattle's contract allowed the CTA to lock in savings of \$60,000 on the purchase price of each hybrid bus. In addition, CTA estimates that the hybrid technology will save the agency nearly \$7 million annually in maintenance, parts and labor costs over buses currently in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

"Older buses are costly to maintain and break down more frequently. This agreement provides a unique opportunity to fast forward improvements to our bus fleet and provide more reliable service, so we moved quickly to execute it," said CTA President Ron Huberman. "By working with Seattle and New Flyer, the CTA was able to lock in reduced pricing for these buses and will take delivery much faster than through a traditional order."

CTA's current fleet includes 378 buses that are 17 years old, and 385 buses that are 13 years old. The replacement buses are expected to begin delivery in August 2008 and CTA expects to have all 150 before summer 2009.



"The hybrids we have been testing have been performing well so we wanted to capitalize on the opportunity to pick up Seattle's contract option at a significant cost savings," said Chicago Transit Board Chairman Carole Brown. "The articulated buses will be able to accommodate more customers per bus while lessening the impact of our fleet on the environment – both benefits that are important to our customers."



The CTA has been testing 10 hybrid buses equipped with a parallel drive system, similar to a hybrid system found in a car. The 10 buses have recorded nearly 250,000 service miles since January 2007 and registered only one in-service failure. The 40-foot hybrid's average fuel consumption is 4.43 miles per gallon, a 77 percent improvement compared to the 1991 TMC buses they will be replacing. The 40-foot TMC buses average 2.5 miles per gallon.

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

## CTA Introduces New Express Farecard Vending Machines for Credit Cards

3/3/08

For customer convenience, CTA is installing new express farecard vending machines that will allow

customers to use credit cards to purchase and add value to CTA farecards. The express farecard machines accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover Card and American Express credit cards, as well as debit cards that have an accompanying credit card logo.

Using the express farecard machines, customers will be able to purchase magnetic strip transit cards and add value to either magnetic strip transit cards or Chicago Card.

When paying with credit card or an applicable debit card, the minimum value that can be added to a magnetic strip transit card or Chicago Card is \$5. As a security measure, the maximum value that can be charged to a credit card is \$25 each calendar day.

"Allowing customers the option of using credit cards is one more way we are trying to improve service and be responsive to their needs," said CTA President Ron Huberman. "Investing in the new express farecard vending machines is just the first step we are taking in upgrading and modernizing stations for riders. The CTA will continue to look for ways to integrate credit cards and technology into our fare media strategy."

The first five of 60 machines are located at O'Hare station (Blue Line), Merchandise Mart (Brown and Purple Express Lines), Clark/Lake (Loop), Adams/Jackson (Blue Line) and Midway (Orange Line).

Following a 30-day testing period, the remaining 55 express farecard machines are expected to be installed over the next four months at more than 45 CTA rail stations.

Adding the new express vending machines to stations will allow CTA to relocate some of the existing cash-based farecard vending machines to stations that currently have only one machine available, improving access for customers at those stations.

The machines were purchased as part of a larger contract with Cubic Transportation Systems that also included the purchase of 30 wheelchair accessible turnstiles and additional parts to maintain the new equipment once installed. Funding for the \$4.47 million purchase of the express vending machines is from CTA bonds.

## CTA Makes Transition for Senior Free Rides Program Beginning March 17

3/12/08

*Seniors Reminded to Expend Remaining Value on Reduced-Fare Media Cards*

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) reminds senior citizens to use up any remaining value on their reduced-fare media cards in preparation for the transition from a

reduced-fare system for seniors to a free-ride system, which goes into effect Monday, March 17.

Only seniors who possess an RTA-issued permit will be eligible for the free rides program. Existing senior permit cardholders do not need to reapply in order to be qualified for the program and are asked to retain their current Magnetic Strip Senior Permits or the Smart Card Senior Permits to gain access to CTA's fixed route services.

Seniors who do not possess an RTA-issued senior permit will be asked to pay the regular full-fare.

CTA has reprogrammed all of its fare equipment to accept RTA issued senior permits with no charge for fares or transfers. Importantly, seniors must continue to use their senior permits as they have in the past – either tapping the smartcards to the touch pad or inserting RTA-issued senior permits into the farecard machines – in order to register their rides.

Should seniors have any questions or experience any problems, CTA bus operators and customer assistants are available to assist and address any questions that customers may have as it relates to the senior free-ride system.

Seniors who do not currently have a permit but are interested in participating in the Senior Free Ride Program need to apply for the RTA-issued permit. To be eligible for the permit, citizens must be age 65 or older and live in the RTA service region that includes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties. For more information, individuals can call the RTA Travel Information Center at 312-836-7000 or TTY: 312-836-4949.

Any remaining value on unexpired senior reduced-fare media cards as of Monday, March 17 will be eligible for a refund until July 1, 2008. The refund value of monthly passes will be prorated; refund value for other eligible fare media will be given at-cost. Expired cards are not eligible for refund.

Customers can check the remaining balance of their reduced-fare media at any of the passenger information units near the Customer Assistance kiosks in most CTA rail stations; by calling 1-888-YOUR-CTA (1-888-968-7282) Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 8 p.m.; or by visiting the CTA Sales Center at 567 W. Lake St., Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Cash refunds can be received only by visiting CTA headquarters in person. Otherwise, customers requesting to receive a check-issued refund by mail will need to fill out a request form and should allow 3-4 weeks for checks to arrive. Check-issued refunds can be submitted in person at CTA headquarters and at select Regional Senior Centers between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. on the following days, courtesy of the CTA and the Chicago Department of Senior Services:

#### Monday, March 17

Central West Regional Center

2102 West Ogden

(312) 746-5300

#### Tuesday, March 18 and Tuesday, March 25

Southeast (Atlas) Regional Center

1767 East 79th

(312) 747-0189

#### Wednesday, March 19 and Wednesday, March 26

Southwest Senior Center

6117 South Kedzie

(312) 744-0440

#### Thursday, March 20 and Friday, March 28

Northeast (Levy) Senior Center

2019 West Lawrence

(312) 744-0784

#### Monday, March 24

Renaissance Court

77 East Randolph

(312) 744-4550

#### Thursday, March 27 and Thursday, April 3

Northwest (Copernicus) Senior Center

3160 North Milwaukee

(312) 744-6681

## **A century on the road**

### **4th generation leads Martz, now celebrating its 100th year in transportation business**

By Ron Bartizek [rbartizek@timesleader.com](mailto:rbartizek@timesleader.com)  
Business & Consumer Editor

**WILKES-BARRE** – Frank Martz Sr. saw opportunity as he watched coal miners trudge to and from work through muddy Plymouth streets. He figured that hardworking miners would welcome an inexpensive, reliable ride at the start or especially the end of a long shift.



So the 23-year-old entrepreneur launched White Transit Company.

A century later, "we're still meeting that need," said Scott E. Henry, president of the Martz Group. Today that means running dozens of buses daily, packed with long-distance commuters, into New York City from terminals in Wilkes-Barre, Scranton and Delaware Water Gap.

Always run by Martz or his descendants, the company has evolved and adapted in the face of changing travel tastes, fuel price spikes and new competition, its success anchored by the same basic principles promised in 1908.

"We have a core value to provide safe, reliable and courteous transportation," said Frank Henry, 74, the founder's grandson, Scott's father, president of the company from 1964 to 1996 and currently chairman. "Don't get fancy with it, just do the right thing."

His grandfather was a big risk taker, Frank Henry said. Martz's daring was rewarded for 25 years, as in addition to the local service transit company and the short-lived Martz Airlines, in 1922 he started Frank Martz Coach Company to serve travelers going to New York and other major northeastern cities.

The company Martz founded now stretches from Wilkes-Barre to Florida and places in between, with 600 employees running more than 200 buses. But the road from startup to national top 10 bus transportation firm has not always been smooth.

## A change in fortunes

The Roaring '20s were a good time for American business, but by 1933, with the nation in the depths of the Great Depression, both the airline and bus company, by then operating 150 motor coaches, struggled to lure passengers.

Then things got worse. Frank Martz contracted pneumonia after leading a trip to the Army-Navy football game in November 1936, before antibiotics that could have saved his life came into wide use. He died at age

51 and "we went bankrupt," Frank Henry said, mincing no words.

The twin tragedies forced the next generation to step in. Frank Martz Jr. cut short his studies at Duke University and returned home to take control of the business. He quickly cut the weakest bus routes and sold the airline to American Airways, predecessor to American Airlines.

And despite having the company's debts erased by the bankruptcy filing, Martz paid every creditor in full.

The company has faced other difficult times since then, Frank Henry said, including the untimely death of Frank Martz Jr. in a helicopter accident in early 1964. After earning a degree in economics at Yale University and serving a stint in the Air Force, Henry had been working at the family business for five years, and then, barely 30 years old, he took the reins.

The 1960s were not a great time for the bus industry. More and more people were traveling by air, and the still-new interstate highway system lured families to the road in station wagons and campers. Frank Henry modestly credits the company's growth in the face of those challenges to a combination of skill and happenstance.

"You have to have some luck and know how to handle it," he said. His first opportunity was right before his eyes – the New York World's Fair, which drew more than 50 million visitors during a two-year run. The company, then known as Martz Trailways, did its part to spin the turnstiles, running dozens of buses weekly to the extravaganza in Flushing Meadows.

"The world's fair came along and we were there," Henry said. "We would ring the inside of the square and the outside," he said, with up to 40 buses making the trip on a Saturday.

A decade later, after selling White Transit to the Luzerne County Transportation Authority, Henry tied the company's fortunes closer to the travel and tour sectors. He began a methodical series of acquisitions with the 1974 purchase of Atwoods Gold Line in Washington, D.C., adding other companies in the nation's capital, Virginia and Florida over nearly two decades. A travel agency started in 1984 offered a full line of options with or without a bus component.

In 1990, all the business divisions were united under the Martz Group, with Frank Henry as chairman.

In addition to running their own business, Martz company leaders have been involved in wider industry activities since Frank Martz Sr. helped found the National Trailways Bus System, which gave independent companies the ability to compete with a voracious Greyhound that was consolidating the industry. Trailways acts as a buying group for supplies and services and – equally important – allows smaller bus

companies to sell a single ticket that would take travelers anywhere in the nation.

Scott Henry now serves on the board that his father chaired twice. "We are the only founding carriers left," he said.

The younger Henry also serves as chairman of the Pennsylvania Bus Association, another post his father once occupied.

Frank Henry recently received a lifetime achievement award from the American Bus Association, for which he has served on the board for more than 30 years and was the first operator-elected chairman in 1989. He now is secretary/treasurer of the organization.

Both executives are quick to point out they had plenty of help building the business.

"The biggest thing we have going for us is our employees," Frank Henry said. And many of them also have been multiple generations of the same families. While that can occasionally lead to an uncomfortable parting of ways, it hasn't caused the company to institute an anti-nepotism policy.

"When we hire someone we hire them for who they are," Henry said.

None of them worked out better than George Staskevicz, who began hanging around the original Martz bus barn in the Bull Run section of Plymouth when he was a child, and then came to work for the company. He stayed for 82 years; a span during which his duties included driving the first coach that Frank Martz Sr. had custom built in 1912.

## Now and the future

Scott Henry's advance to the president's office has been a welcome relief from previous crises. He began at age 14 by cleaning buses in the company's Old River Road bus barn, gradually working his way through a succession of jobs before and after earning a business degree at Boston College.

He did some work outside the company, but, "there was never any doubt in my mind as to where I wanted to end up."

After being based in Stroudsburg, where he oversaw construction of a new terminal and a maintenance facility, Scott Henry now spends most of his time at the Wilkes-Barre headquarters, occupying an office where model buses compete with books for shelf space.

"I keep moving into different things and taking over roles from my father," he said. "I'm basically 'in training' so to speak."

The now far-flung enterprise is no longer a one-man show, however. In addition to the father and son Henrys, the only family members currently involved in running Martz Group, there's a slim corporate staff that includes a CEO based in Washington, and financing and marketing executives.

Scott Henry has spent the last few years unifying the appearance of all the company's operations, putting the Martz name front and center on what are essentially more than 200 traveling billboards.

The uniformity allows Martz to send buses wherever they are needed, "and they match," Henry said. "And you want to build the brand."

But they're not identical; smaller lettering identifies which division a bus belongs to. That helps avoid confusion when buses from various divisions converge on the same destination, such as the 2004 presidential inauguration, when 100 Martz buses carried thousands of celebrants to Washington from all directions.

This year the buses also sport a 100th anniversary decal that can be conveniently removed in 2009 without disturbing the underlying paint scheme.

Scott Henry, who on his birthday next month will be half the age of the company, also has spent a good deal of time researching the Martz story, gathering photographs and artifacts that document the history of the venture started by his great-grandfather. He's incorporated the material into a 2008 calendar filled with photos and highlights of employees, buses and executives, with a page even devoted to the airline.

"I consider myself to be extremely fortunate" to have the chance to work with his father on a transition, Henry said. But there hasn't been a complete handover yet.

"The two of us get together on most major decisions," he said. But, "I know whose opinion means more."

It's likely that a fifth generation will someday run Martz Group. Scott Henry has four children, and one of them, a sophomore in high school, cleans buses on weekends, "kind of the same way I did when I was a kid."

While there is no formal succession plan, "basically this is a family business," Henry said. "There really hasn't been the need to define it because we're all comfortable with what we're doing."

## MARTZ GROUP AT A GLANCE

*Holdings:* Bus transportation and tour divisions in Northeastern Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia and Florida, under the Trailways and Grey Line trade names. Travel agency in Wilkes-Barre.

*Ownership:* Privately held

*Management:* Frank Henry, chairman; Scott Henry, president; Craig Smith, CEO

*Revenue:* More than \$50 million

*Payroll:* \$16.1 million

*Employees:* 600 systemwide, 150 in Wilkes-Barre

*Bus inventory:* 220 systemwide, 51 in Wilkes-Barre

*Info:* www.martzgroup.com

"I keep moving into different things and taking over roles from my father. I'm basically 'in training' so to speak."

Scott Henry

"We have a core value to provide safe, reliable and courteous transportation. ... Don't get fancy with it, just do the right thing."

Frank Henry

## **SOUTH SHORE RAILROAD CHANGES PUT ON HOLD**

by Troy Kehoe (tkehoe@wsbt.com)

**SOUTH BEND** — A South Shore expansion project that could cut up to 25 minutes out of the trip to Chicago is on hold while an Indiana Senate Committee debates its funding. But local leaders say that doesn't necessarily mean it's been derailed.

The project would re-route trains coming into the South Bend station at South Bend Regional Airport by moving the current station on the airport's east side to the west side. That would cut out the loop around the airport's south side that trains coming from Chicago now have to make before pulling into the station.

That route takes trains across 23 different "at grade" street crossings. The new route would eliminate all but six of those crossings.

It won't happen without funding, and right now, the project's fate lies in the hands of state lawmakers. Matt Poczatek is used to delays. He rides the South Shore Line from South Bend to his parents' home in Chicago during breaks from his studies at Notre Dame. And he knows, the nearly three hour trip can be trying on riders' patience.

"It seems to bog down once you get about a half hour from here," he said while waiting for the train to depart South Bend Thursday afternoon. "It seems like we're pretty close, then we slow way down."

That's why he and other South Shore riders are so excited about a plan that could shave up to 25 minutes off the trip. It's a more direct approach that local leaders say would help bring in big bucks.

"I think it would have a huge impact on the economic viability of the county here," said South Bend Regional Airport director John Schalliol, one of several local leaders to testify in favor of the plan before Indiana Senate's Tax and Fiscal Policy Committee on Tuesday.

South Bend Mayor Steve Luecke also told lawmakers the plan represents a significant investment into the entire region's future.

Last month, House lawmakers approved a plan to use 4.4% of the sales taxes in St. Joseph and LaPorte counties, and 12.5% of the sales taxes from Lake and Porter counties to help pay for upgrades across the line, including new spurs off the South Shore near the Illinois state line, and new approaches to new stations in Michigan City and South Bend.

At Tuesday's committee hearing, some senators balked at the project's \$1 billion price tag, saying its money the state can't afford to lose in an uncertain economy.

"It would take sales tax revenues that typically go into the general fund," said State Senator John Broden (D) South Bend, speaking by phone from the Statehouse. "I think that has some people worried."

But Schalliol says there could be another way.

"We the airport could put up the local share for the improvements here in South Bend. Michigan City with their casino revenue might be able to front the local share over there too," he said.

That wouldn't be able to carry the project by itself. Still, Senator Broden says it now appears the bill may have one last shot at the statehouse next week.

He says its critical lawmakers take it.

"Every dollar the state or local government puts into this project, we'll receive a \$1 federal match, up to \$500 million," he said. "If we don't match that money, we lose it, and I think there are concerns that it might not be there for very long if we delay."

For their part, passengers on Thursday afternoon's train agreed.

"It's got to be funded some kind of way," said Derrick Woodson, who rides the train from South Bend about twice a week. "However you can do it, it needs to be done."

Not everyone is on board with the plan. Some worry the new route would pass too close to their homes.

"I don't want it going through my backyard, or behind my backyard, or by my front yard," said Laura Swanson, who lives on Lexington Avenue, near one of the proposed new Western routes. "I can see where they'd want to save time. But if it's moving closer, we would have to move. And I really don't want to move."

Schalliol says the term "backyard" is a misconception.

"It's not really in their backyards. It's 340 feet from the back of their houses, which is a pretty good distance. It's a lot further than the train is from a lot of residents where it goes now."

He says the train would be hidden much better than it is now, too.

"We will berm the tracks, fence it, and landscape it. So it will be very difficult to tell it's even there. We will also make the crossings such that the horn doesn't have to be blown when it comes to the crossings, which is one of the major nightmares for the folks that live along the rail now."

Still, some remain unconvinced, and worry South Shore tracks open up the possibility that freight to the airport could be shipped through their neighborhoods soon, too.

For now, the arguments may be irrelevant, unless lawmakers give the final green light to fund it. Senator Broden says it should be apparent one way or another which direction the project is headed by Tuesday night.

## Premier backs TTC takeover

**McGuinty's vision: A regional authority operating 'seamless' transit across GTA**

Feb 15, 2008 04:30 AM

**ROBERT BENZIE**

**TESS KALINOWSKI**

STAFF REPORTERS

The TTC should be taken over eventually by the province's new transportation authority to provide "seamless" public transit in the Greater Toronto Area, says Premier Dalton McGuinty.

McGuinty, whose government has a 12-year, \$17.5 billion transit expansion plan for the GTA, said yesterday the province would like to eventually integrate the TTC

into the fledgling Metrolinx regional authority, and could do so without additional funding.

"It's just a matter of ... us making the linkages on our own once we have the transit systems in place," the premier told reporters.

The dream of Metrolinx, formerly known as the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, is a system of efficient transit across the region that would let commuters travel effortlessly across municipal boundaries without the hassle of separate fare and route systems.

But the idea of handing over control doesn't sit well with TTC chair Adam Giambrone, who wants to ensure the City of Toronto continues to run The Better Way.

"It is critical that we maintain control (of the TTC) for the benefit of the residents of Toronto," Giambrone said.

There are fears that integrating the huge TTC system with those of the service-starved suburban regions would ultimately result in diluted services in the city.

Metrolinx chair Rob MacIsaac has recommended the city allow Queen's Park to take over the cost of the subway and other TTC routes with "regional implications."

He gave that advice to an independent panel reviewing the city's finances recently, but emphasized the province should fund operating and capital costs, not actually run the system.

That's a position more in favour at city hall.

"We have always talked about transit being run locally," Stuart Green, spokesperson for Mayor David Miller, said yesterday.

"There's a role for the province and that's to fund operating costs," he said, noting the province has done a better job on the capital side.

Green added that there certainly can be better coordination of regional transit, but it doesn't require an upload of the TTC.

"The TTC needs to be run by people in Toronto, not by a regional body."

McGuinty said it only makes sense to mirror how other large metropolitan areas around the world run transit.

"We're looking to Metrolinx for the best advice in that regard, as to what we need to do together to ensure that we have a user-friendly, affordable, good state-of-repair public transit system," he said.

"I think one thing that I can say is, if you look around at most large urban centres there tends to be a larger regional body that takes responsibility for these kinds of things, so that from the perspective of a user it is perfectly seamless."

McGuinty has no timetable in mind but wants the province and city to work together on the initiative.

"That's an important ... conversation that we'd have to have with Toronto and their representatives, the council," he said.

The premier also emphasized that any amalgamation would not affect his much-hyped regional transit expansion scheme.

"The Move Ontario 2020 Plan has nothing to do with the future of the TTC. Its 52 separate municipal public transit projects. We take on that construction, that responsibility, in its entirety and we relieve them ... of any financial obligation," he said at a Mississauga school where he announced \$40 million in funding for 160 librarians over the next four years.

Giambrone said he's confident Metrolinx, currently a provincial planning agency, is interested only in ensuring there are sufficient operating funds for "transit services that have regional benefit."

He is one of four Toronto representatives on the 11-member Metrolinx board, which also includes Miller.

"The board isn't interested in operations," he said.

"It's more interested in making sure we can deal with (transit) expansion."

Giambrone noted that York Region Chair Bill Fisch and Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion, who also sit on the Metrolinx board, have never expressed interest in running the TTC.

- With files from Richard Brennan

## Premier Dalton McGuinty unveils new GO double decker bus

**TORONTO** – March 20, 2008 – GO Transit is growing bigger – and taller – with 12 new Enviro 500 double decker buses. Manufactured by Alexander Dennis Limited (ADL), they will be on the road here by the end of April 2008. Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty was joined by Minister of Transportation Jim Bradley this morning at the ceremonial unveiling of the first double decker bus to arrive at GO's main bus facility.

A first for GO's fleet, the double deckers can seat 78 people – 46 on the upper level and 32 on the lower level – offering 37 per cent more seating capacity than our regular highway buses. This will not only improve service on our busiest routes, but will also reduce the amount of fuel consumed and harmful emissions produced per passenger.

Customers will enjoy an exceptional view from the upper level, with reclining seats to make things even more comfortable. Features of the double deckers include

individually adjustable air vents, individual reading lights, and 12V power outlets – two on the lower level and four on the upper level.



The buses are also accessible. They each have two wheelchair locations, a kneeling (lowering) feature, a powered wheelchair ramp, wide aisles and front door, and low floors.

The double deckers will run on Hwy. 403 and Hwy. 407 between Oakville GO Station and York University, with stops at Square One GO Bus Terminal and Bramalea GO Station. Our Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service along Hwy. 407 is very successful, with over 500 trips every weekday during the school year. The new buses will increase capacity to help meet demand on this busy service.

Premier McGuinty also took the opportunity to announce an additional \$1- billion investment to strengthen municipal infrastructure. Learn more about the Premier's infrastructure investment announcement.

### Double decker bus quick facts

- The double decker buses are manufactured by Alexander Dennis Limited, a UK-based company. There are no North American manufacturers of double decker buses.
- The buses' dimensions are:
  - Length: 43 feet (13 metres)
  - Width: 8.3 feet (2.5 metres)
  - Height: 14 feet (4.3 metres)
- GO Transit's standard 45-foot (13.7-metre) highway commuter bus seats 57 passengers; the double decker bus can carry 78 passengers – an increase of 21 riders or 37 per cent.
- To prepare for the introduction of double decker buses, GO worked with the Ministry of Transportation, all road and fire departments from the regional and local governments along the proposed routes, representatives from 407

ETR, and the Ontario Provincial Police.

- Selected routes for the double deckers have been thoroughly studied to ensure height clearance.

## New trolley buses aim to ease overburdened Main Street routes

Feb 14 2008

After months of delays, TransLink has finally introduced articulated trolleys to the overburdened bus routes that run along Main Street. The buses are designed to carry more people; thus, the wait for a bus with room on it may now be much shorter. The trolleys were brought in about four months ago, but an electricity infrastructure was not in place to accommodate them. When full, the 90-foot trolleys had trouble getting up steep hills.

TransLink spokesperson Drew Snider says the new buses should help alleviate the overcrowding and extended waits suffered by riders on the route. "We've got three in service right now," he said. "We'll have 20 on that line. It will be all articulated, all the time."

Snider added the rest of the buses should be in service by June.

They can't come soon enough for Main Street transit riders, who have complained about having to wait through as many as five passing buses during peak times before one arrives with room for more passengers. The standard 40-foot trolleys hold about 80 people; the new articulated ones carry 110.

With the electricity issue resolved, the buses will be introduced slowly as drivers are trained to properly operate them. Snider says once the rest of the buses are on the road, Main Street will be closer to its future as a more fluid thoroughfare, including so-called "bus bulges" to make for quicker stops when picking up riders. "The whole Main Street urban showcase project has been designed to make transit — and even walking — along that street a much more viable option," he said.

In addition to Main Street, Victoria Drive will see 20 articulated trolley buses added over the next few months.

The dispatching of the buses comes days after the new TransLink board underwent a weekend of scrutiny for accepting its new pay raise. The new board will now make \$1,200 per meeting. The old board made \$200. TransLink directors will be paid whether they attend the meetings in person or over the phone. The per-meeting fee is on top of a \$45,000 base salary. The chair of the board will take in a \$100,000-per-year flat fee. TransLink has insisted the pay for the board is necessary because it is now made up of professional transit experts. The old

board consisted of a consortium of mayors from around the Lower Mainland. The new board is made up of appointed — not elected — officials.

Jeremy Nuttall

## New tram on track

Geraldine Mitchell

February 15, 2008 12:00am

IT'S a long way from France but this new tram has only just begun its journey to a new home. The tram, the first of five to arrive in Melbourne, was unloaded at Webb Dock yesterday and will be transported across the West Gate Bridge today.

It will undergo minor modifications at the Preston workshop before it takes to the tracks as a No. 96, running from East Brunswick to St Kilda, in May.

The tram is the same size as the longest trams that operate in the city and carries about 240 passengers.

The remaining four trams will also arrive by ship from France in coming months at a cost of \$8.8 million to the State Government.



Yarra Trams spokesman Colin Tyrus said the five new trams would all be in service by September.

Mr Tyrus said route 96 would be serviced entirely by low-floor trams.

## Audit: DART knew in early '07 about soaring cost of rail plans

Chief defends not telling board in early '07 that estimate off by \$900M

12:00 AM CST on Wednesday, February 13, 2008

By MICHAEL A. LINDENBERGER / The Dallas Morning News

DART's top executives knew for nearly a year that running rail lines to Irving and Rowlett could cost nearly \$1 billion more than the agency's financial plan envisioned, an internal audit released Tuesday said.

But DART president Gary Thomas decided against sharing that information with board members, the report by internal auditor Albert Bazis said.

"In spite of the early indicators of cost increases and the financial plan projections, there was no adjustment made to the 2008 financial plan because of the decision to look for cost reductions," Mr. Bazis' report said.

Mr. Thomas and his key lieutenants knew as early as mid- to late 2006 that costs would be significantly higher than the \$988 million budgeted for the projects, the audit said. At that time, senior executives raised the possibility of informing the board of the changes, but Mr. Thomas decided against doing so, according to the report and interviews Tuesday with those executives.

The board ordered the audit in November, almost immediately after Mr. Thomas dropped what several members described as a "bombshell" by announcing that the costs for the two rail projects could be as high as \$1.9 billion.

The report states that Mr. Thomas knew as early as February 2007 that the \$988 million figure was off by as much as \$900 million – and that he decided against telling board members at the time.

On Tuesday, the DART president defended that decision as a prudent one.

"At the time, it seemed like the most rational, logical decision, given the information I had," said Mr. Thomas, who had just received the audit and had not read it.

"How would it have helped to have told the board earlier than I did? The numbers would have still been the same," Mr. Thomas said. "I had a responsibility to make sure that the numbers were real and that we had done our due diligence."

Instead, he ordered staff to review the estimates and find ways to reduce the costs through what is called "value engineering" – basically making changes to the rail plans, which can be enormously complex with hundreds or even thousands of engineering details.

In the weeks since the \$900 million announcement was made in November, staffers have identified about \$185 million in savings on the projects – a decision that was the culmination of a months-long review, Mr. Thomas said. DART plans to borrow heavily to keep those and two Dallas projects on schedule.

But on Tuesday, board members responding to Mr. Bazis' report said any efforts Mr. Thomas had decided to

take to reduce those costs did not relieve him of responsibility for sharing the numbers with the board.

"There is no way that any amount of value engineering could have added up to \$900 million," said board member William M. Velasco II of Dallas, who pointed to the stated savings of \$185 million as proof.

Instead, he and other board members said, their own credibility has suffered as elected officials and others have demanded answers.

"Over the past six weeks, I have been inundated with calls from people who I know asking me, 'What is happening down at DART?'" Mr. Velasco said. "The people that appointed me to the board expected me to do a better job as a board member. My personal integrity has taken a hit. I was hoping today to get answers."

"Who knew what, when"

The purpose of the audit, Mr. Bazis said Tuesday, was to determine "who knew what, when."

But several board members said his audit did not go nearly far enough in assessing blame.

"There are no names named in this report," Mr. Velasco said. "I was expecting names to be named."

More important, several members said, the report makes clear that Mr. Thomas and his top assistants knew about the rising costs long before the board was told, but does not explain why Mr. Thomas decided to keep silent.

"This is a very, very serious matter," board member Angie Chen Button of Garland said.

Mr. Velasco said he welcomes Mr. Bazis' supplement, but said he will continue to push for an outside audit of the decisions as well.

The report does make clear that board members had been told long ago that costs were rising on the Irving and Rowlett projects, but members were not told with any detail how big those changes would be.

In July 2006, consultants hired to do preliminary design for the Irving and Rowlett projects had told senior staff members that the costs would be much higher than budgeted, according to the audit.

The next month, board member John Carter Danish of Irving pressed for answers from staff about reports he had heard that the costs were going to be much higher than anticipated.

In response, Mr. Thomas replied that no detailed estimate of the costs had been completed, the audit report said.

Discussions with staff

In interviews later Tuesday, two senior executives who report to Mr. Thomas said managers had discussed with

him at least twice – once in 2006 and again early last year – the possibility of giving the board more details about the cost estimates. In both cases, they each said, Mr. Thomas decided against doing so.

"That is something you are going to have to ask Gary," said Doug Allen, executive vice president for program development. "We all had talked about the differences [between the cost estimates], but that was the decision he made."

The rising costs also led Chief Financial Officer Sharon Leary to suggest adjusting the agency's financial plan to reflect those costs – a move that would have required board discussion. She, too, said Mr. Thomas decided against doing so.

"After he explained his position, it actually made sense to me," she said Tuesday. "He wanted us to make sure we were dealing with the right numbers."

Mr. Thomas declined to say whether he had made a mistake.

"In hindsight, it is always easier to say you should have done this or done that," he said. "But I am not allowed that luxury."

#### Shaw contract

Also Tuesday, DART general counsel Hyattye O. Simmons told board members that a contract between former chairman Lynn Flint Shaw and Deloitte Services LLP did not appear to violate the board's ethics policies.

"This was not a DART contract," he said, stressing that there was no evidence that the \$20,000 contract had influenced Ms. Shaw's work on the board.

The contract came to light last month when the agency's external auditors, Deloitte & Touche, revealed that Deloitte Services – an affiliated firm – had signed a contract with Ms. Shaw for consulting work.

Ms. Shaw resigned last month shortly after the contract was revealed, though she maintained she had done nothing wrong other than failing to disclose the contract.

Ms. Button and others said the larger fault rests with Deloitte & Touche, their longtime auditors, for failing to realize until too late that an affiliated firm had signed a contract with a board member.

## Monorail ride to ruin in Las Vegas

- Andrew Clark in Las Vegas
- February 18, 2008

WALL STREET is bracing itself for impact when monoline and monorail collide.



The troubled Las Vegas monorail. Photo: Getty Images

It is billed as the easiest way to visit New York, Venice, Paris and the Sahara in a single day. However, a slick \$US650 million (\$717 million) monorail linking Las Vegas's famous casinos is in trouble - and causing a headache on Wall Street.

Plastered with Vegas logos, the elevated train plies a route behind the vast hotels that line the Strip - the desert city's main thoroughfare, where tourists can see live lions, dancing fountains, a roaring volcano and a miniature Eiffel Tower, not to mention live shows by the likes of Bette Midler and Cher.

Conceived as a way to ease the Strip's traffic jams, it was opened with classic Vegas pizzazz in 2004 when Nevada's governor took an inaugural ride flanked by showgirls wearing 1.2-metre headdresses. But since then, passengers have been hard to come by. Instead of the forecast 54,000 customers, the monorail attracts barely 21,000 users a day.

On a sunny afternoon last week passengers were few and far between. At the Flamingo stop, halfway down the strip behind a casino built by the mobster Bugsy Siegel, five people were waiting on the platform. "We're here because our feet are killing us," said Manuel Nieto, a tourist visiting from Albuquerque with his wife, Esther. "We walked for about 10 hours yesterday."

The Nietos complained that the monorail was expensive at \$US5 a trip. That is partly because, unusually for a public transport project, it was funded entirely on borrowed money without a cent of subsidy from taxpayers.

Three tranches of debt were used to pay for the monorail. Lower tiers of \$US49 million and \$US149 million are plain vanilla risk-bearing notes held by public and private investors. But the biggest chunk, \$US450 million of "senior" debt, carries the name of Nevada's Department of Business and Industry and is insured by Ambac, a monoline insurer that is one of the US's biggest financial guarantors.

At the end of last month the credit-rating agency Moody's declared that barring an unexpected surge in passengers the monorail would be unable to keep up repayments on its loans beyond 2010. Although the bonds' insured status gives them a blue-chip AAA rating, Moody's downgraded its underlying risk of default to a junk status, Caa2 - the third lowest level on its scale.

"Ridership levels haven't been at the level expected really since the inception of the project," said a Moody's analyst, Denise Person.

That verdict could hardly be worse for Ambac. Together with its monoline rivals MBIA and FGIC, it faces huge liabilities after diversifying from its traditional strength of municipal bonds into backing mortgage-related securities. It lost \$US3.26 billion in the fourth quarter.

Ambac has had its credit rating cut by Fitch and is on negative watch by Moody's and Standard & Poor's. A downgrade would mean a slump in the value of all the bonds it backs, prompting multi-billion-dollar write-offs by Wall Street banks. The near certainty of a big payout on the Las Vegas monorail only compounds its problems - and it could even find itself operating the unloved railway. "As soon as Ambac makes a payment, they enjoy a range of step-in rights," said a Moody's analyst, Bart Oosterveld. "They would basically take over the asset."

The debacle is a deep disappointment for Nevada's monorail backers, who achieved a rare distinction in keeping a big transport infrastructure project off the public books.

In Britain, light-rail schemes have generally required government aid. Between 1980 and 2004 seven systems were built, including trams in Birmingham, Manchester and Croydon. They cost £2.2 billion (\$4.7 billion), of which £1.2 billion came from the Government.

"The fact it was all built with private money is amazing," said Larry Fabian, a Boston expert in light-rail projects.

Bad luck has played a part. Bits started falling off the trains within a few months of the opening, prompting a 14-week shutdown. And efforts to set up a system that would allow hotel guests to use their room key cards as tickets were frustrated.

But critics say there are more fundamental problems. The line is hard to find, running through the backyards of hotels. It offers views of cooling towers, car parks and generators. And, crucially, it does not run to the airport. "If they don't connect to the airport the whole thing is really stupid," Mr. Fabian said. Wendell Cox, a transport consultant who advised opponents of the monorail, said many visitors enjoyed strolling along the strip on foot and had no desire to get on a train. "The Vegas street scene is one of the most interesting street scenes in the US," he said. "I don't believe there is any way this kind of project could make money."

Ambac has admitted it is reserving cash for a default. A spokesman said: "It's been on our radar." Since the credit crunch began, its shares have dived 90 per cent. There is a chance, albeit still remote, that an evaporation of confidence among clients could drive it out of business. If so, the retail holders of monorail bonds will find themselves out of pocket - an extremely unusual event for triple-A-rated instruments.

The future is uncertain. The monorail company points out that its revenue is covering day-to-day operating costs, making liquidation foolish. Public subsidies would be controversial among taxpayers, since the train is largely to carry tourists rather than residents. In the worst-case scenario, a contingency fund exists to demolish the tracks - which would be an inglorious failure for a city proud of its prowess at judging the odds.

Guardian News & Media

## **Daimler Buses Delivers Two Setra S 417 Luxury Motorcoaches at 2008 UMA Motorcoach Expo**

**SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (January 18, 2008) –**



Daimler Buses North America delivered a pair of Setra S 417 luxury motorcoaches at the United Motorcoach Association (UMA) Expo in San Francisco to ProTran of Fort Washington, Md. and Arrow Stage Lines of Omaha, Neb.

ProTran, a professional full-service charter and tour company took delivery of its Setra S 417 luxury motorcoach at the Expo. ProTran's Setra S 417 luxury motorcoach is equipped with such upscale onboard amenities as leather Ambiente seating, a full galley with wood veneer and a refrigerator, satellite television, a rear window, Blaupunkt GPS satellite navigation, a tire monitoring system, a scenic view camera and four 19-inch monitors.

The second Setra S 417 luxury motorcoach went to Arrow Stage Lines, a premier IMG member charter-

company. The Setra S 417 luxury motorcoach for Arrow Stage Lines features the TopSky®, a glass roof that runs the length of the aisle offering spectacular view for passengers. In addition to the TopSky®, Arrow's coach features a satellite television; a full galley in the rear of the coach; a Blaupunkt 10-disc CD changer and Blaupunkt multi-channel system; a Garmin GPS a scenic view camera; a card table; airline-style tray tables; and a laptop connection. The coach also comes with such safety features as a fire suppression system and a tire monitoring system making it one of the safest vehicles on the road today.

"With our continued success in the premium segment of the motorcoach market, the Setra S 417 provides the benchmark in customer experience with its breathtaking design and unmatched comfort," said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for Daimler Buses North America. "More than any other coach on the market today, the Setra S 417 embodies what luxury travel is all about. The elegance, design and spaciousness of the Setra S 417 all contribute to a uniquely luxurious travel environment."



Both vehicles feature EPA '07 Detroit Diesel Series 60 clean diesel engines, as well as ZF transmission in addition to the many standard features that make the Setra S 417 motorcoach the benchmark in the luxury coach market.

"Differentiating yourself from your competition is a challenge every motorcoach operator faces today," said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America. "We offer a great number of exclusive options to make your passengers' travel experience even more special – and your coaches even more distinctive."

## Ryjo Tours buys first coach, an MCI® J4500

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 3, 2008** — Ryjo Tours of Tessier, Saskatchewan, took delivery of a luxurious new MCI J4500. Ryjo has been running tours since 2000. This delivery marks the company's first very own new coach. Ryjo's new J4500, which features a low-emissions Cummins engine, also features a high-end Blaupunkt entertainment system plus other amenities that include a front-view camera that feeds scenic road video to 15-inch monitors for passenger viewing.



"I've always been an MCI man," said Terry Coben, who was a coach driver for nearly 20 years before starting Ryjo with his wife, Joyce. Terry Coben also said the MCI's ability to withstand harsh winters entered into his decision to buy — a belief that was affirmed when the coach encountered a snowstorm during its inaugural journey, a 22-day trip through Arizona and California. "We found out that this coach handles well in all conditions, even in extreme winter weather," said Coben.

Ryjo is fully booked most of the year, with the Cobens spending summer months researching and planning upcoming trips so they can provide the personalized, hands-on service for which they are known. Terry Coben drives and conducts all of the long-distance tours while Joyce Coben handles office duties plus a few local excursions.

Though the Cobens have no plans to expand their fleet, the new coach does give them added presence in the marketplace. "A new coach is an advertisement for your company," he said.

## Keeping Maine's air clean: Cyr Bus Lines takes delivery of seven MCI® J4500s

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 12, 2007** — When Maine-based Cyr Bus Lines sold part of its operations recently, it decided to reinvest the proceeds from the sale into new coaches — seven new Fast-Track MCI J4500s, to be exact.



The new coaches, all in attention-grabbing red, have EPA-compliant Detroit Diesel engines and Allison transmissions, and Cyr is pleased with their eco-friendliness. "I like that you can stand behind the bus and not even smell it," said Joe Cyr. "They're going to be good for the country, and they're good for us."

Cyr said the J4500s have performed reliably, an important consideration, he says, given that Cyr's tour and charter coaches generally log about 70,000 miles a year and its line-run coaches average about 120,000. Cyr's motor coach fleet currently stands at 23, 17 of them MCIs. Cyr says he chose the new J4500s because they are the best value. "The new price isn't always the end price," said Cyr. "It's also the price of parts and maintenance. You can buy a \$100,000 coach and end up putting \$300,000 into it, and you'll still have a \$400,000 coach."

In its fourth generation of family leadership, Cyr Bus Lines was founded in 1912 in Old Town, Maine, by John T. Cyr, grandfather of Joe Cyr and great-grandfather of Michael Cyr, who manages day-to-day operations for the company. Originally a school-bus company, Cyr is today a full-service operator and was named Metro Magazine's 2004 Operator of the Year. More information can be found at [www.cyrbustours.com](http://www.cyrbustours.com).

## Breathing easy in the Big Easy: Hotard adds three new eco-friendly MCI® D4505s to its fleet

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 12, 2008** — As New Orleans remains eco-minded in its rebuilding efforts, Hotard, one of the area's leading providers of motor coach transportation, is switching to a greener fleet. The company has begun to introduce new motor coach models that cut particulate matter, black smoke, by 90 percent. Its three newest MCI D4505s, delivered in December, are equipped with EPA-compliant Cat C-13 and ZF Astronic power trains that feature DPF filters and use Ultra Low Sulfur diesel fuel. The company has even switched its signature colors from purple and orange to purple and green, signaling what the company calls "a cleaner tomorrow." The slogan will begin appearing on all of Hotard's marketing materials.

Hotard isn't stopping there. The company is looking at all the additional ways that it can go green, including

investigating the use of bio-diesel fuel. Already, it recycles oil, anti-freeze and other fluids. Hotard has also joined GoCoach.org, a consortium of coach operators and manufacturers that is promoting motor coach travel to the public as an eco-friendly way to go.

"Environment issues in New Orleans are serious concerns," said Jim Szeszycki, president of Hotard Coaches, Inc. "As a transportation leader in this community with a strong brand name and 75-year legacy here, it is essential that we begin to make the shift to the new, cleaner coaches and put practices into place that will make a difference right now and in the future." Szeszycki adds that the three new coaches are just the beginning of a fleet overhaul and expansion the company has planned since the storm, when it lost 28 coaches.

Today, Hotard's business is on an upswing, with more than 60 percent of its current 37-coach fleet used for contract work. "We do have a high volume of business, and that's where the D- model comes in," said Szeszycki. "It's the right size for our airport transportation center, efficient, and the most reliable coach in the market." Hotard's new D4505s feature seating by Amaya and a state-of-the-art entertainment system with flat-screen video monitors.



Szeszycki, a former manager of five-star resort and hotel properties, is responsible for Hotard's New Orleans operations and surrounding branches as well as a full-service shop on a five-acre site. Szeszycki recently acquired Hotard Coaches Inc. along with majority partner and CEO of Hotard's companies, Callen Hotard. With its sister company Calco Travel; they represent the largest private transportation presence in the Gulf South. Hotard Coaches is a member of several industry organizations including IMG, UMA, ABA, NTA and TIA.

## Jubb's Bus Service returns to MCI with delivery of new J4500 coach

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 17, 2008** — After operating school buses for 67 years, Jubb's Bus Service (JBS), based in Glen Burnie, Maryland, motored into the coach business in 1994, when it bought out a local operator running GM and MC8 coaches.

When it came time for the company to purchase a new coach in 2008, JBS was led back to its MCI roots.



"Price is a big factor in the purchasing decision, but it is never the only factor," says Randy Jubb, third-generation owner and president of JBS. "We chose MCI because we have confidence in MCI's reputation for sales and service. The MCI sales process and technical servicing support of our new coach has proved their reputation true."

Jubb's new J4500 coach is equipped with a Ricon wheelchair lift and a Caterpillar C13 engine and ZF-ASTronic transmission powertrain combination. Other features include Amaya Brasil seating and a Blaupunkt entertainment system including six 15-inch LCD monitors.

JBS specializes in selling personalized tour packages. The company operates a fleet of five motor coaches and 85 school buses. Founded in 1927, JBS is a member of the American Bus Association, Maryland Motorcoach Association and United Motorcoach Association.

## Black Diamond Adds First Setra S 417 Luxury Motorcoach for VIP Guests

**Greensboro, N.C. (March 11, 2008)** – Black Diamond Limousines & Transportation, LLC added its first Setra S 417 luxury motorcoach to its fleet. The Mesa, Arizona based company has wrapped the Setra S 417 with the logo for a prominent national casino and uses the motorcoach for luxury casino charters and tours. Black Diamond, which has been in business for nine years, will use the Setra S 417 to serve casino customers on a daily basis, as well as other VIP guests, corporate groups and charters. Black Diamond has made its mark in the Phoenix market by operating black, luxury coaches, something unheard of in the intense

summer heat of the Southwest United States. A full-service transportation provider, Black Diamond specializes in casino runs/charters, custom tours, corporate group transportation and group charters.



"In selling a premium service, the Setra S 417 was the perfect addition to our fleet," said Gregory Estrada, President of Black Diamond Limousines & Transportation, LLC. "Our customers truly appreciate the comfort and pampering the Setra S 417 provides."

Introduced to the North American market in 2003, the S 417 is setting the benchmark in luxury motorcoaches by providing comfort and innovation to both guest and driver alike. The ultra-modern, spacious S 417 interior cabin design provides guests with a state-of-the-art audio system, which includes a CD/DVD player and five 15" monitors positioned throughout the cabin. The Setra S 417 provides added value through many cost savings benefits for the operator including extended maintenance intervals, an industry-leading multiplex electrical system with self diagnostics, and a low maintenance HVAC system.

"More than any other coach on the market, the Setra S 417 luxury motorcoach embodies what luxury travel is all about," said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America. "The coach's spaciousness, views, design and exclusive materials all contribute to a uniquely luxurious travel environment."

## Carson Tours Takes Delivery of Its First Setra S 417 Luxury Motorcoach

**Greensboro, N.C. (February 22, 2008)** – Carson Tours Ltd. of Edmonton, Alberta purchased its first Setra S 417

luxury motorcoach with the unique TopSky feature – a glass roof that runs the length of the motorcoach. As a one-coach operator, Carson Tours carefully selected the Setra S 417 because of its superior passenger amenities, along with the timely technical support and effective technical solutions that Daimler Buses North America offers.



Carson Tours, a family owned business run by Mike and Diane Lorentz, is a local and long distance luxury motorcoach coach tour and charter operator with destinations from Alaska to Louisiana, Queen Charlotte Islands to Prince Edward Island, New England to California and everywhere in between. In business since 1982, Carson Tours has a long and successful company history and an extremely loyal customer base.

"It was very important to me when shopping for a new luxury motorcoach to partner with a company that provides outstanding support and that is exactly what I found with Daimler Buses," said Mike Lorentz, President of Carson Tours Ltd. "While the luxurious passenger appointments attract the customers and keep them coming back, it is the service and support of Setra that lets me rest easy." Introduced to the North American market in 2003, the Setra S 417 continues to set the benchmark in luxury motorcoach travel by comfort and innovation to both guest and driver alike. In addition to the innovative TopSky® feature the Carson Tours Setra S 417 is equipped with a rear window, satellite television, scenic view camera and Setra's own ambiente seats, providing a truly luxurious environment. The Setra S 417 provides added value through many cost savings benefits for the operator including extended maintenance intervals, an industry-leading multiplex electrical system with self diagnostics, and a low maintenance HVAC system.

"We are committed to providing Carson Tours and all of our customers with levels of responsiveness rarely experienced anywhere else," said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America. "With coast-to-coast service networks across North America, Daimler Buses can offer the type of

service you need to make sure your Setra remains productive for years to come."

## New Flyer Receives 1,253 Bus Orders Valued at Over US \$603 Million

March 8, 2008

New Flyer Industries Inc.(TSX:NFI.UN) ("New Flyer" or the "Company"), the leading manufacturer of heavy-duty transit vehicles in Canada and the United States, announced today that it has received orders over the last three months for up to 1,253 buses (1,549 equivalent production units or "EUs") for a combined value of over US \$603 million. Of these orders, 874 buses (918 EUs) are new orders and 379 (631 EUs) are exercised options. These orders are for a variety of vehicle configurations, including 35-, 40- and 60-foot buses and diesel, hybrid-electric, and compressed natural gas (CNG) propulsion systems.

The largest of these recent new orders was awarded by Metropolitan Transit System in San Diego, CA totaling \$151 million, which included 50 40-foot CNG buses with options for an additional 300 buses as well as an order for 12 35-foot gasoline-electric hybrid buses with options for an additional eight buses.

Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) in Cincinnati, OH awarded New Flyer an order totaling \$101 million for 24 40-foot clean diesel buses with options for an additional 270 buses. The award also included an order for six diesel hybrid buses. This contract represents the first order New Flyer has received from SORTA.

Other bus orders recently awarded to New Flyer include:

- Chicago Transit Authority in Chicago, IL has exercised options for 150 60-foot hybrid buses (300 EUs).
- Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas, NV has ordered 47 40-foot CNG buses with options for an additional 30 buses.
- Mississauga Transit in Mississauga, ON has ordered 69 40-foot diesel buses.
- Calgary Transit in Calgary, AB has exercised options for 20 60-foot (22 EUs) and 30 40-foot clean diesel buses.
- TransLink in Vancouver, BC has exercised options for 42 60-foot hybrid buses (84 EUs).

- Oahu Transit in Honolulu, HI has ordered 10 60-foot hybrid buses (20 EUs) with options for an additional 20 buses.
- Hamilton Street Railway in Hamilton, ON has exercised options for 22 40-foot clean diesel buses.
- Other new contracts and exercised options total 143 buses (197 EUs).

New Flyer's backlog as of the end of February 2008 was 7,478 EUs, which represents an increase of 41% in comparison to the 5,313 EUs in backlog at January 1, 2007. The value of the order backlog as of the end of February 2008 of US \$3.05 billion has increased by 69% compared to the US \$1.8 billion backlog at the start of 2007. The portion of firm orders included in the backlog has increased to US \$1.39 billion as of the end of February 2008 from US \$0.8 billion at January 1, 2007.

## Hayden Motorcoach celebrates with the acquisition of a 2008 Prevost coach

**Sainte-Claire, Quebec, February 26th 2008** – Hayden Motorcoach, Phoenix, Arizona, celebrated their first anniversary with the recent purchase of a 2008 Prevost H3-45.



Keeping in line with their slogan, 'after safety...it's all about the Service!' - The coach is equipped with Prevost's Electronic Stability Program, Tire-Monitoring System, Fire Suppression as well as two-tone leather seating, premium sound system with satellite radio and many other luxury appointments. "The purchase of this coach gives us the edge we needed to compete in the high-end market of Arizona", said owner Scott Hayden. "In addition to the quality, Prevost has the curb appeal that fits our image best. We are very grateful for the outstanding service from our Prevost representative, Mark Stenz."

Hayden Motorcoach operates luxury equipment for charters and tours in Arizona and the Southwest.

## Decision nearer on fate of Tampa streetcar

### Tampa's trolley runs on shaky finances.

By Mike Brassfield, Times Staff Writer  
Published February 17, 2008

**TAMPA** -- Five years after it started rumbling down the tracks, Tampa's streetcar is running out of time.

The next few months will be crucial in deciding whether it moves forward -- or takes a big step backward.

The streetcar's backers want to run the tracks into the heart of downtown Tampa to get more local passengers on board, not just the tourists and conventioners who mostly ride it now.

They're chasing federal grants to do that, but federal authorities are asking pointed questions: What's the long-term strategy for this thing? Will it be running 20 years from now?

The problem: The streetcar is burning through the \$5-million endowment set up to operate it. The latest estimates say it could be out of money in just three years.

The city of Tampa would be on the hook to take over its funding, and Mayor Pam Iorio says the city isn't in a position to do that.

Now streetcar officials are working on a business plan intended to balance the system's books, ensure its survival and pave the way for expansion.

The TECO Line Streetcar runs for nearly 2-1/2 miles between Ybor City, the Channel District, the St. Pete Times Forum and the Tampa Convention Center.

Extending the route only four blocks north along Franklin Street would bring electric streetcars right up to the Tampa City Center esplanade, the brick courtyard with trees and fountains nestled amid downtown's core of office towers.

"Once that's accomplished, workers could step out of the office, hop on a streetcar and go to Ybor for lunch and never have to get their car out of parking," said Michael Chen, a board member of the nonprofit group that oversees the system. "New residents of the Channel District could walk a block to the streetcar and ride downtown for work."

The goal is to capture a wider audience and make this more like streetcars in New Orleans and Portland, used by visitors and locals alike. At least some of the cars would likely have to run faster, on speedier express routes.

The move is projected to add 80,000 riders a year, substantially boosting fare revenue, though adding early morning hours for office workers would also raise costs.

The streetcar's critics see it as an expensive boondoggle that should be mothballed, while supporters say it's a public asset that should be nurtured. They argue that it has spurred development around Channelside and is a marketing tool in Tampa's bids to attract conventions and events. Also, its total passengers rose to nearly a half-million last year.

"I don't believe a lot of what has happened along the route would have happened without the streetcar," said John Moors, director of the Convention Center. "From a tourism aspect, it's still an important facet when we sell the destination."

Most of the streetcar's operating funds come from a multimillion-dollar endowment -- an inheritance of sorts from a previous transportation system that died. It's left over from money that Harbour Island's developers had pledged to run their "People Mover" elevated tram to downtown, which was torn down in 2000 for lack of riders.

The original plan was to spend only the interest on the endowment, but higher-than-expected costs have forced the streetcar's board to tap the principal. It's drawing more than \$1-million a year from the fund. About \$2.95-million is left from the original \$5-million, and it will shrink faster as the principal is depleted. At this rate, it'll be gone by January 2011.

Laying tracks into the downtown core will cost \$3.8-million to \$4.4-million. Local transit officials have \$2.5-million in federal grants and are seeking more. They just shifted a nearly \$1-million grant away from the streetcar extension because it was about to expire.

But federal authorities want a commitment that the streetcar will run for at least another 20 years. The streetcar's board would have to get Mayor Pam Iorio to agree, which would mean pledging city support once the endowment is gone.

So the board is seeking to put the streetcar on firmer financial footing and to lengthen the life of its endowment. Among the strategies they're considering:

Sell naming rights to six stations for \$600,000.

Sell more ads on the cars.

Trim service. They've already downsized from four cars to two on weekday afternoons.

Make changes to a tax paid by businesses and rental units along the route. The city could spread the tax to

condos with homestead exemptions. The special tax is \$33 per \$100,000 of assessed property value.

Project how much money that tax will raise as the Channel District grows.

"We have to convince the mayor we can do this," said board member Michael English.

"That's a tough one," Iorio said in an interview. "We love the streetcar," she said, but it wouldn't be fiscally prudent for the city to sign a 20-year pledge to cover the system's deficits.

Because the streetcar is a selling point when Tampa bids for big events like the Super Bowl and the ACC basketball tournament, the mayor wants local tourism officials to set aside some hotel tax dollars for it. She'd like Hillsborough County to support it, too, although some county officials have been among its harshest critics.

The best-case scenario for the streetcar has it evolving into a realistic transportation option for locals and a more vital part of the fabric of downtown Tampa.

In the worst case, the system probably wouldn't be mothballed entirely. That could require paying back \$10-million to \$20-million of the federal grants that built it. But it could be reduced to a shadow of what it is now, with the seven-day-a-week service scaled back to weekends and special events. It would subsist on its \$2 fares and its special tax, which raised \$435,000 last year.

"The extension is critical," English said. "The system is creeping up toward a half-million riders, but it still isn't connected to the core of downtown."

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### **TECO streetcar**

Passengers per fiscal year:

2003: 420,000

2004: 425,000

2005: 434,000

2006: 390,000

2007: 440,000

**The fare essentials: As technology simplifies transit commute, will that mean standardized system here?**

Sunday, February 17, 2008

By Jonathan Vit [jvit@sjnewsco.com](mailto:jvit@sjnewsco.com)

It started in Brooklyn. Longtime friends Davide Gadren and Stefan Berteau, intrigued by the notion of the eastern seaboard becoming one giant megalopolis, decided to trace exactly how far they could travel on public transportation.

What they found was an intricate web of bus and rail lines 603 miles long that connects East Coast cities from Portland, Maine to Fredericksburg, Va.

"The entire northeast corridor is connected on the public transportation network," said Gadren. And, it's possible to travel the eastern seaboard without ever stepping foot on Amtrak.

Interconnected systems of public transportation are fostering new ideas among regional transit authorities. Now, more than ever before, larger regional authorities are concentrating their efforts to unify countless small operations under a single-fare system.

The transit community's first attempt at a standardized fare was the Port Authority of New Jersey and New York's "RIS" system for PATH lines. It worked with EZPass-like smart cards which could be linked to a bank account.

In Philadelphia, regional fares captured the imagination of PATCO officials in planning the commuter rail line's current upgrade to a smart card system.

"We designed the system with a vision for it to be interoperable," said Cheryl Spicer, assistant general manager of PATCO. "We knew that PATH actually designed the RIS standard, and we signed an agreement with them to adopt that standard,"

PATCO's smart card project entered the design phase in 2002. Since then, improvements in technology have encouraged other regional transit authorities to eye what some officials deem "the future" of fare collection: Sensors that allow the use of "contactless" bank cards.

Pioneers of the RIS system that PATCO used to build its brand-new \$13 million Freedom Card system have admitted that smart cards are becoming old technology.

"That is why we are exploring," said Steve Coleman, spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. "The technology is moving very fast, and we are looking for one system to work on all lines."

Coleman had to look no farther than Manhattan to find inspiration for a new, completely open fare system. On July 11, 2006, New York Transit installed a CitiBank-sponsored bank card system along the Lexington Avenue line.

The tap-and-go bank card terminals which treat transit companies as just another merchant are now entering a second phase and expanding the service to the

Westchester (County) Bee Line, the Long Island bus system, the PATH and the MTA bus system.

"I think compatibility and cross-utilization are issues that are on the forefront of transit up here because a lot of people make cross trips between (New York City) and New Jersey," said Coleman. "The goal is to make it as seamless as possible."

When Gadren and Berteau traveled for five days from Fredericksburg, Va. to Portland, Maine in a practice they dubbed "megaloping" they realized how common cross-system commutes are in some regions.

In Connecticut, the two megalopers met businessmen who boarded public transportation in New London and rode it to New Haven in order to board the Metro North into New York City. Once in the city, they relied on the subway to traverse the five boroughs.

During Gadren and Berteau's own trip, numerous connections including one at the Walter Rand Transportation Center in Camden were missed due to the need to purchase a new ticket.

"We did kill a bit of time, and there were a couple connections we missed because of it," Gadren said of the need to purchase new tickets.

Berteau explained that the trip didn't have to take five days, but the two friends traveled at a leisurely pace, taking in the sites and people along the way.

If a traveler adhered to a strict time schedule, didn't miss a single connection, and traveled 14 hours a day, it would be possible to cover the 603 miles between Fredericksburg and Portland on public transit in two days.

And, no doubt, a universal fare system would bring this possibility closer to reality. Even at a slow pace, Gadren and Berteau found themselves carrying pockets full of mixed change just to board a bus.

"It would have made it a lot easier," said Berteau of a universal system. "Particularly on the bus system because we had to juggle a lot of coins to make sure we had exact change for whatever the bus system cost."

Representatives of PATH, NY Transit and SEPTA all claim to be investigating the feasibility of a universal, bank card-equipped fare system. In other parts of the country, transit authorities are looking past bank cards toward cell phones as a possible alternative to old-fashioned paper and plastic tickets.

In Philadelphia, home of an antiquated token collection system, SEPTA is looking to partner with PATCO on a project that would expand rail lines. SEPTA officials say they are looking toward a bank card system.

"We are going to put out a request for vendors interested in the project in March," said spokesman Jim Whitaker.

"Technology is rapidly changing and because of that we are looking to see where it is going in the future," Whitaker added. "We are looking at more advanced systems, and we are looking at what we can do."

However, if a separate open fare system tied to bank cards or cell phones becomes the preferred alternative to tokens for each transit authority, commuters from New Jersey to Philadelphia would still need two tickets, one for PATCO and another for SEPTA.

Assistant General Manager Spicer described the decision to go with a smart card system as one based on solid technology.

"As far as we are concerned, we are on the edge of technology" with the Freedom Card system, Spicer said. "Right now, we are on the leading edge and we are a lot more flexible."

It cost PATCO \$13 million to scrap the old paper ticket system, which relied on change machines that dispensed a cornucopia of nickels, dimes, quarters and silver dollars.

If technological advances should make Freedom Cards obsolete in a few years, officials said that it would cost less to switch to contactless bank cards.

"I don't think it will be as costly as doing a whole new system," Spicer said. "The bank card utility, once it is proven, may be adopted by other properties and we may move there."

## **\$138 million question: Is high-tech bus system worth the price tag?**

By Seth Rosen / srosen@dailyprogress.com | 978-7245  
February 18, 2008

While Albemarle County and Charlottesville officials have agreed on the benefits of dedicating millions of dollars annually to drastically increase the efficiency of transit service, officials are divided over how far to take that vision.

City councilors and county supervisors last week made a major commitment toward building a more robust bus system by agreeing to ask the General Assembly next year for permission to form a regional transit authority, which would possess the power to float bonds and to levy fees to pay for the expansion of the bus network.

Councilors and supervisors concur that having buses running frequently from downtown Charlottesville to the University of Virginia and up U.S. 29 to the airport, with smaller buses servicing neighborhoods, is a worthy and feasible goal.

But there are divisions over the merits of going a step further and building an expensive bus rapid transit system with dedicated lanes on U.S. 29. Though a fleet of sleek, larger buses speeding down exclusive lanes would shrink travel time and make transit a more attractive option, it would cost up to \$138 million to lay down the asphalt and build the infrastructure.

To some, the investment is worthwhile if such a system will take many cars off the road and if the funding can come from a combination of federal grants and an increase in the local gas or sales tax.

"I think a bus rapid transit system with a dedicated lane certainly sounds like a great direction to be headed in," Councilor David Brown said. "If we could have a system where suddenly it became faster to take transit to get from downtown to 29 north, people would take it."

Other elected officials, however, are skeptical that a bus rapid transit system would accomplish what its advocates predict. And the \$138 million price tag would be a staggering sum for a community of this size, they say.

"There's an awful lot on the City Council's and Board of Supervisors' plates right now. We have challenging budgets, and water and sewer repairs that have to be repaid," Kenneth C. Boyd, chairman of the Board of Supervisors, said.

"And I have not seen to date a big success story of a town our size" that has installed a bus rapid transit system, he added.

A rapid transit system is distinguished from regular bus service in several ways: It is a larger and more attractive vehicle, often resembling a "bullet" train. More importantly, these buses tend to operate in their own lanes so they are not slowed by traffic. And traffic signals are equipped with technology enabling them to turn green when a bus approaches.

The inefficiency of the bus system is one of the major obstacles to enticing more people to ride, officials said. According to the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, 2 percent of Albemarle residents ride the bus to work while 78 percent drive alone. In the city, the figures are 5 percent and 61 percent, respectively.

"We have a good bus system, but they get stuck in traffic and don't come frequently enough to compete with the auto," said Harrison Rue, executive director of the commission.

A dedicated lane, supporters say, would dramatically reduce travel time on the bus, making it a more viable option for commuting and trips to restaurants and shopping.

"At the end of the day, you have to make the bus experience as good as or better than the car experience

to attract the people who have other options," Supervisor Dennis S. Rooker said.

But creating such a system won't come cheaply. A team of outside consultants has concluded it is feasible to build a dedicated lane on U.S. 29 from Hydraulic Road to Airport Road, though it could cost more than \$100 million.

Once the road expansions are completed and the new "bullet" buses are purchased, the consultants said, the annual operating cost of a rapid transit system would actually be slightly less than the alternative of an enhanced regular bus system - \$10.6 million versus \$10.9 million. The current operating budget is \$5.9 million.

Skeptics, such as Mayor Dave Norris, think that a high-frequency bus system that would attract new riders can work without the dedicated lanes - and at a fraction of the cost. He believes that creating a "trunk" system with regular buses running every 10 to 15 minutes down U.S. 29 and east to downtown is a more workable solution.

"I'm not sure, frankly, we have the money at this point to consider \$100 million of dedicated lanes," Norris said.

"I'm much more in favor of seeing us develop a system that will not break the backs of taxpayers but will work much better today," he added.

Supervisor David L. Slutzky agrees that real-estate taxes shouldn't pay for a bus rapid transit system. But he thinks there are plenty of other funding sources out there to make it a reality.

Slutzky is convinced that in the coming years there will be federal subsidies available that could cover most of the bill. As the next administration attempts to lower greenhouse gas emissions, he said, it would be looking to fund improvements to transit systems.

Local funding sources are also available, assuming the General Assembly gives Albemarle and Charlottesville permission to form a regional transit authority. Increasing the sales tax by 0.05 percent would net the two local governments \$13 million annually, and a 4 percent jump in the gas tax would bring in another \$9.2 million a year.

"Even if we had to fund it ourselves, we can afford it," Slutzky said. "\$138 million sounds like a big number when you put it out there by itself, but when you put it in context, it is quite doable."

## **Bus service at risk**

### **Area transit system in urgent need of help**

After years of fiscal woes and shrinking service, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority is moving aggressively to match bus service to passenger needs. There now seems to be broad consensus among

members of the advisory board concerning the need to replace the outdated fixed-route system with a flexible model that more effectively serves passengers and yet keeps costs at an affordable level.

In cooperation with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, WRTA Administrator Stephen F. O'Neil already has begun to work on a plan to implement short- and long-term reforms. The WRTA route structure, although modified frequently over the years, retains the basic outlines established a quarter-century ago.

As is the case in some other states, public transit is moving away from the traditional fixed routes that poorly serve passenger needs and is moving toward consumer-driven "demand-response" service, smaller buses and other strategies designed to cope with rising costs and stagnant state/federal subsidies while better serving residents.

However, the WRTA can't do the job alone. The authority's ability to respond to 21st century transit needs is limited by funding and service policies rooted in the 19th century.

Timing is crucial. Just a week ago, the advisory board voted to cancel two bus routes serving Clinton, Holden and West Boylston, effective in July, and eliminate all holiday service in an initial effort to get the authority's finances in order. The changes are expected to save about \$167,000 annually starting next fiscal year. The authority is expected to spend about \$1.2 million more than it takes in from fares and government payments in this fiscal year.

There seems to be little appreciation on the state level for the transit authorities' plight. The governor's proposed budget would increase funding for regional transit systems — but most of it will go to cover start-up costs of a new transit authority for MetroWest. The 1.5 percent funding increase for the existing regional transit authorities doesn't even cover inflation.

Meanwhile, a proposal to switch the RTAs to a "forward-funded" system, as was done with the MBTA, has stalled. So have pleas for state help in retiring accumulated operational debt and a proposal to ease borrowing costs by using the full faith and credit of the state.

That is puzzling in view of the critical role of bus service in the state's transportation network. Convenient, reliable, cost-effective bus service is a necessity for many residents of the state. It is an environmentally friendly catalyst for economic development and job creation.

The current shrink-to-survive strategy clearly is self-defeating. Area lawmakers, working in cooperation with the WRTA and regional planning commission, should give top priority to halting the current downward cycle.

## Chinese buses bring welcome change to Cuba

Thu Mar 13, 2008 7:03pm EDT  
By Esteban Israel

HAVANA (Reuters) - Change is coming to Cuba, on Chinese wheels.

And Cubans, long accustomed to waiting for hours on curb sides for a creaking "guagua" (bus), like what they see.

Deficient public transport, one of the most pressing problems inherited by Cuba's new president, Raul Castro, has taken a great leap forward over the last year thanks to thousands of buses imported from China.

It is the most noticeable change to life in Cuba since Raul Castro took over as caretaker when his brother Fidel Castro fell ill and stepped aside in July 2006.



The transfer of power was completed last month when Raul Castro was formally named president, raising hopes among some Cubans that the improvements he has overseen in transport might be spread to housing and other social services.

The lines at Havana bus stops are now much shorter with new buses running 10 or 15 minutes apart, and the sight of Cubans racing desperately to catch a lone bus already packed with passengers is less frequent.

"This is improvement, compared to the apocalypse we were living through," said state employee Jose, 51, amazed to see two buses arriving simultaneously.

Flashy articulated buses have replaced the notoriously uncomfortable "camels" or humped-back buses Cuba resorted to when the loss of Soviet aid took the communist island nation to the brink of collapse in the 1990s.

Cuba started buying buses from Zhengzhou Yutong Group Co. in 2005 when its economy recovered with the help of Venezuela, and stepped up the pace last year by

ordering another 5,348 buses worth \$370 million, becoming the company's largest foreign client.

Yutong buses, with air conditioning and TV screens, now connect Cuban towns in rural areas where the more usual form of transport has been standing in the back of open trucks or crammed into privately-run vintage Chevrolet trucks.

For years, Cuba relied on second-hand buses brought from European cities, and Cubans were accustomed to taking buses still showing destination signs such as Rotterdam Zentrum or Milano Centrale. It also bought school buses from Quebec, with flashing lights on signs in French.

The more dilapidated buses coughing up clouds of black smoke on Cubans streets are most often 20 to 30-year-old vehicles made in Soviet-bloc countries on their last legs.

### DETROIT TO THE RESCUE

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Cuba lost billions of dollars in subsidies provided mainly through cheap oil supplies bartered for sugar exports.

As the economy plummeted and public transport came to a halt for lack of fuel, vintage American cars revved up their motors and went to work as private taxis that were allowed by the government to fill the void.

Detroit's best, from sporty Buicks to elegant Cadillac's and De Soto's half a century old, have plied the streets of Cuba ever since picking up passengers.

The drivers of private jitney cabs were a favorite target for Fidel Castro, who accused them of being selfish capitalists charging hefty fares compared to highly-subsidized public bus services. But competition has arrived from China.

"Now there are more guaguas, these guys who have made fortunes will have to lower their fares. That's what works well, the law of supply and demand," said Jose Perez, waiting for a bus with a heavy bag of tools on his arm.

Perez, 58 and a member of the ruling Communist Party, said the better bus services were due to the economic recovery that kicked in after Venezuela started supplying Cuba with generously-financed oil in 2000, now up to 92,000 barrels a day.

And he thinks the Chinese buses are just the start.

Perez believes more changes are on the way to improve living standards. He for one would like the right to stay at one of the tourist hotels where he works fixing air conditioners.

While no one expects Raul Castro to follow China's path to free-market capitalism under communist control, he has encouraged open debate on the failing of Cuba's socialist system, from decrepit housing to low wages.

"Things are changing. I can now say what I think at work, and I get home in just 30 minutes," said Miguel, 28, an accountant who added that he did not miss Fidel Castro's long speeches interrupting baseball games on television.

(Editing by Anthony Boadle and Kieran Murray)

## Commuter buses' popularity puts Placer agency in mass-transit pickle

By Tony Bizjak - [tbizjak@sacbee.com](mailto:tbizjak@sacbee.com)

Last Updated 6:16 am PDT Wednesday, March 12, 2008  
Story appeared in MAIN NEWS section, Page A1

No more riders, please!

It's not a message you'd expect to hear from a transit agency, but it's exactly what Placer Commuter Express bus officials are pleading.

With gas prices mounting and the economy slowing, commuters from Colfax, Auburn and other foothill communities have been filling bus seats so fast that operators this week said no more.

The little agency, which runs three leased buses on Interstate 80 to and from downtown Sacramento, announced it will sell tickets only to current riders.

Anyone else will have to go on a waiting list.

That's because of reports piling up in recent weeks that Placer's green and white buses have had to turn riders away, Placer County public works official Will Garner said.

"We need to control the amount of tickets we sell before it gets any worse," he said. "This came on rapidly."

The agency temporarily leased a fourth bus, which will follow the most popular morning and afternoon buses to pick up any riders left behind.

But agency officials say they don't have the money to expand service beyond their three-bus, 150 daily rider capacity.

News of Placer's predicament surprised other local transit officials. Many, however, said they also have seen ridership increase on their lines.

Capitol Corridor trains from Auburn to Sacramento are now about 75 percent full, and saw a notable bump in February, train operators report.

City of Roseville transit supervisors report their own commuter express buses have become so popular they've had to order a half-dozen more. Delivery isn't until next year.

Sacramento regional transportation planner Mike McKeever said he has even noticed more riders on the short-hop Regional Transit bus he takes between downtown and Curtis Park.

"I think people are recalibrating what is the smart economic choice for them," McKeever said.

Waiting at Fifth and P streets Tuesday evening for the Placer bus, state worker Gloria Henson of Roseville said she made that financial – and emotional – recalibration when she decided last year to stop driving to work. The state subsidizes about half of her monthly \$125 bus pass.

"It's the gas," she said. "Plus, I was exhausted when I got home."

The Placer Commuter Express problem highlights an issue many transit agencies face: More people are interested in riding, but service remains skimpy, and the budget prognosis isn't great.

Despite an infusion of Proposition 1B transportation and transit funds, the state has cut other transit money, and local sales and property tax revenues are in a slump.

The region's biggest agency, Sacramento Regional Transit, cut bus service in January in an ongoing struggle to stay out of the red.

Placer officials say they never expected to find themselves with a surplus of riders. Truth is, they are pleased.

Until recently, Garner said, "transit services couldn't get enough riders."

Placer County started the I-80 commuter bus service in conjunction with several foothill cities in late 2004 amid doubts that people would ride.

The transit line was designed as a supplement to the Capitol Corridor train and Roseville commuter bus services.

Last year, the agency had to add a third bus in the morning and evening.

By last month, reports came in, Garner said: The first and second buses were leaving riders behind.

Garner said Placer officials now are talking about limiting ticket transfers from the Capitol Corridor and Roseville services.

Train and bus rider Joan Jernegan of Auburn, who left Los Angeles partly because she hated freeway car

commutes, said this is a clear sign transit needs better funding.

"I was shocked," she said, by the agency's message: "We're out of space, and no fourth bus! More people are taking public transit and there is no money for public transit."

Placer transit officials said they could ask the Board of Supervisors about funding a fourth bus, but that would require the county and cities to take a financial hit.

The service costs the county and participating cities \$600,000 a year, Garner said. Rider fares cover 42 percent of that cost – a high return by transit standards – but the localities would have to dig up the rest of the money.

Placer riders, meanwhile, are left wondering not whether the bus will show, but whether there's a seat on it for them.

"Nobody's been left behind yet on our bus," Henson of Roseville said. "But we're getting a little nervous."

## Caparo ties up with Hyundai to launch luxury buses

26 Mar, 2008, 0210 hrs IST, TNN

CHENNAI: Caparo India has signed a technical agreement with Hyundai Motor Company, South Korea, for its foray into the luxury bus segment. Caparo's assembling plant will have an annual capacity to make 1,500 buses.



Caparo is evaluating locations like Sriperambadur, Oragadam and Nellore in the south to set up the plant and expects to firm up its decision in three months. Caparo India country head Sunil Pahilajani said the technical tie-up will help the company to take a quantum leap and bring world-class luxury buses to the domestic market.

He said production will commence by the last quarter of 2008-09. The pact will put both the organizations on a common platform. It will lead to a manufacturing association that will help enter new areas of common interests, Mr. Pahilajani said.

Hyundai commercial vehicles president Choi Han Young said it was a bold and major step for Caparo. Although it was a huge challenge to take the first step in the commercial vehicle business, 30 years of exposure and a premier position in the automotive field would be a big advantage to Caparo, he added.

Caparo India new projects CEO Dev Mukherjee said the company's new venture will set new standards and become a benchmark for the luxury bus segment. Keeping customers' aspiration for first class travel and fatigue reduction during long distance travel, Caparo would design a model that will offer comfort and style, he said. Asked about Caparo's investment, he said it would run into "a few hundred crores". He said the vehicles could have both the names (Caparo-Hyundai) or another totally different name.

However, the branding strategy has also not been firmed up, he said. "The travel needs are growing and people want to travel in comfort," he said adding the company would pitch itself higher and bring buses that are on par with global standards as far as styling and comfort aspects are concerned.

Mr. Mukherjee said that initially it would be a CKD (completely knocked-down) operation and gradually it will be localized (chassis parts, body). The 44-seater luxury bus will come in three variants and have a 320 hp to 380 hp range. Initially, the project will have a potential to generate 200 jobs.

## Transit lines seeking smartest 'smart card'

**Goodbye tokens, hello plastic. As PATCO tries its own fare system, SEPTA thinks bank cards could work best.**

By Paul Nussbaum

Inquirer Staff Writer

Is a "smart card" clever enough to recognize SEPTA and PATCO and NJ Transit?

And are transit agencies smart enough to create automated fare systems that work together?

As public transit authorities move from tokens and tickets to "contactless" cards, two possible futures await riders.

One is a plastic version of the present, where each agency has its own fare card, usable only on its own system. The other future involves mutually acceptable cards, sort of an E-ZPass for transit riders.

Smart cards typically have a computer chip and radio antenna that allow passengers to wave the card at a turnstile and be on their way. The fare is automatically deducted from a preloaded sum or from a bank account.

With widespread interest in smart cards that can work in multiple cities, the fight now is over the best way to do it - bank cards or transit cards. That battle is shaping up to be the transit version of VHS vs. Betamax. Or HD DVD vs. Blu-ray.

Locally, PATCO has gone one way and SEPTA seems headed the other.

SEPTA expects to issue requests for smart-card proposals by mid-March and to award a contract by the end of the year. SEPTA is interested in getting a system that would use a new-generation Visa or MasterCard, making a bus or train ride just another retail transaction.

PATCO, the 14-mile rail line between Center City and South Jersey, introduced its Freedom transit card in November and expects all its stations to be converted to use the card by the end of the month. Its card now works only on its system, but it is designed to be adaptable to others.

Meanwhile, in North Jersey, NJ Transit is developing a pilot program for two bus routes in Jersey City to make fare collection compatible with the SmartLink transit card now available on PATH trains to New York. New Jersey transportation commissioner Kris Kolluri said the long-range goal is to have a card that works with the various New York and New Jersey transit agencies, including PATCO.

"There is a lot of discussion in the industry about where the future is going," said Martin Schroeder, manager for the Universal Transit Fare System Task Force of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). "There really is a sea change, because agencies are at the point where they have to do something."

To promote flexibility among transit agencies, APTA created a standard for transit cards, to allow them to be used on any system. PATCO is the first - and only - agency to follow that standard for transit cards, and even the PATCO card is not yet fully compliant with the APTA standard.

"The system we have now can be used by anybody," said PATCO general manager Robert Box. "SEPTA and New Jersey Transit could follow the APTA standard and use different vendors. And we could use each other's cards interchangeably. It would be similar to E-ZPass."

Box said he and other PATCO officials had met with SEPTA and NJ Transit planners to urge interchangeable fare systems.

"We're encouraging them to do something that is compatible with ours," he said. "I'm pretty confident neither authority is going to ignore what we're doing. We have set ourselves up to the best of our ability to have it be a regional system."

Mayor Nutter's newly appointed deputy mayor for transportation, Rina Cutler, said she didn't want to see

PATCO, SEPTA, and the Philadelphia Parking Authority all with their own, incompatible smart cards.

"There ought to be one electronic payment system for transportation in the region," Cutler said.

SEPTA officials say they also want compatibility and expect to make "interoperability" a requirement for would-be vendors. For the million riders who travel daily on SEPTA buses, trains, subways and trolleys, a bank-card fare system seems to make most sense, according to new general manager Joseph Casey. He said that would make a SEPTA card compatible not only with other transit agencies, but with retail merchants, as well.

"I think the banking industry is heads and shoulders above the transit agency industry," Casey said.

SEPTA officials note that as important as compatibility is, most SEPTA passengers don't use other transit systems.

About 1,800 of PATCO's 33,140 daily riders also use SEPTA subways and buses.

On SEPTA's Regional Rail trains, there are about 500 transfers to and from Amtrak and 1,900 transfers with NJ Transit at Trenton, out of about 125,000 daily trips.

About 1,650 trips a day involve a transfer from NJ Transit's River Line to PATCO, and about 300 trips a day involve transferring from NJ Transit's Atlantic City Rail line to PATCO, according to 2006 NJ Transit data.

SEPTA, on the cusp of the technology revolution, may find itself in the unaccustomed position of being an industry leader.

"They will be one of the first with the opportunity to go to this without worrying about a 'legacy' system," said Greg Garback, the finance chief of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. He is chairman of the board of the Smart Card Alliance, a multi-industry group pushing for smart-card use. "You could say they 'strategically underinvested.'"

Garback described SEPTA officials as "extraordinarily bullish" on a smart bank card.

SEPTA wants to create a fare-collection system that would free the agency from being wedded to a single equipment manufacturer.

In the past, transit agencies typically bought fare-collection systems from a single manufacturer such as Cubic Corp. (New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Washington, PATCO); Scheidt & Bachmann (Boston, Phoenix); Indra (St. Louis); Affiliated Computer Services (NJ Transit); or Thales (Toronto).

"When you go to CompUSA for a printer, you just take it home and plug it into your CPU without worrying about the brand. We'd like to do that with fare components,"

said Jerry Kane, SEPTA's project manager for the fare-collection study. "That really hasn't happened anywhere yet."

Even as transit agencies struggle with which way to go, the next generation of fare payment has appeared on the horizon: the cell phone.

On Jan. 29, San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit system began testing a program that allows passengers to pay fares by waving their mobile phones at the smart-card reader on the turnstiles. A wireless chip in the phone completes the transaction and debits the passenger's bank account.

Such cell-phone systems are already used by foreign transit agencies, and cell phones are increasingly used for other retail purchases.

"More people have cell phones than credit cards," said Schroeder of APTA. He predicted widespread use of cell phones for fare payments within five years.

"If it's like crossing the Grand Canyon to get to a [smart] card, the leap from that point to adding mobile phones is like stepping across a stream," said Randy Vanderhoof, executive director of the Smart Card Alliance. "The technology is already compatible with the banking industry."

## New York to Boston for \$1? Yes, for Some Who Call Early

By KEN BELSON

Published: March 25, 2008

For travelers who want to get from New York to Boston for less than it would cost for a cup of coffee at Starbucks, two emerging bus lines may have the answer.



Megabus.com plans to announce on Tuesday that it will begin service between New York and seven other East Coast cities starting on May 30.

Two-year-old Megabus.com, a subsidiary of Coach USA, is based in Paramus, N.J., and is structured much like Southwest and other low-cost airlines. Tickets are sold on the Internet and by telephone, with the best deals for those who buy tickets the earliest. The first seats on the runs between New York and Boston sell for as little as

\$1, for one-way fares, with prices rising to as high as \$14 as the departure date approaches.

Megabus.com's announcement comes three weeks after news came from another bus company, BoltBus, a division of Greyhound, that it would introduce similar services between New York, Boston and Washington, also starting at \$1 a fare. Prices rise to as much as \$25 for a one-way fare between New York and Washington.

Megabus.com buses are outfitted with movie screens and free wireless Internet connections, and customers can book tickets on the company's Web site with cellphones or BlackBerry smart phones. The company runs only express routes between cities; buses stop only occasionally so drivers can take a break.

"We don't make stops five or six times along the way, which makes us similar to driving your car," said Dale Moser, president of Megabus.com, a sister company of the Gray Line New York Sightseeing bus line. "And you're guaranteed a seat."

A BoltBus official said the company would not be outdone by Megabus.com. BoltBus "is the best of all worlds in terms of extreme value and on-board service, with three inches of extra leg room and electrical outlets at every seat," said Dustin Clark, a company spokesman.

Megabus.com buses to Baltimore, Buffalo, Boston, Philadelphia, Toronto and Washington will pick up and drop off passengers on the northeast corner of Eighth Avenue and West 31st Street, outside Pennsylvania Station. Buses to Atlantic City will leave from the Port Authority Bus Terminal nine blocks north. The company will operate 11 departures a day to Boston and Washington.

Both the BoltBus and Megabus.com fares are far below regular, nonrefundable Greyhound tickets, which run \$33 for a one-way ticket between Boston and New York.

To introduce riders to its service, Megabus.com plans to offer free tickets to customers who book reservations for May 30 to June 5.

More than 900,000 customers have ridden on Megabus.com to and from its two existing hubs, Chicago and Los Angeles, which now serve 22 other cities, Mr. Moser said.

He added that with airlines adding fuel surcharges and gasoline prices rising, travelers who do not typically ride buses might look at his service.

About 35 percent of the company's customers are young professionals from 18 to 30, and another 30 percent are women from 30 to 55 who do not want to drive into the city, Mr. Moser said. Another 19 percent are what he called "silver surfers," elderly passengers who want to

visit family and friends and often travel during nonpeak periods.

Transportation experts say that to succeed in New York, Megabus.com needs to make bus travel more alluring and dispel the notion that it is for people who cannot afford trains or planes, or do not own a car. To do that, the company must convince customers that it offers better service than other bus companies.

"There's certainly the perception that buses are for poor people and people without cars," said Jeffrey M. Zupan, a senior fellow for transportation at the Regional Plan Association. "The way they'll overcome it is to provide a first-class service. Give people a newspaper and cappuccino to create the feeling they are not second-class citizens."

## Bombardier To Supply New Locomotives For NJ Transit

Berlin, February 22, 2008

Powerful Locomotives to Haul New Bombardier MultiLevel Passenger Cars for Leading Transit Operator



### BOMBARDIER

Bombardier Transportation has been awarded a contract for 27 ALP-46A electric locomotives by the New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ TRANSIT). The powerful new locomotives will help NJ TRANSIT expand capacity in its passenger rail operations, hauling specially designed multilevel commuter rail cars Bombardier is currently delivering to the transit service provider. The firm order for 27 locomotives is valued at an estimated 155 million euros (\$229 million US). The contract also includes options for an additional 33 locomotives.

The new ALP-46A locomotives are based on service-proven ALP-46 electric locomotive technology that has been in successful operation with NJ TRANSIT since 2002. NJ TRANSIT currently utilizes 29 ALP-46 locomotives as part of its commuter rail fleet.

ALP-46A locomotives will feature a number of

technology upgrades along with improved acceleration and increased operating efficiency. The locomotives will be capable of speeds up to 125 mph and will be powered by highly reliable *BOMBARDIER MITRAC* propulsion and controls equipment. *MITRAC* propulsion and controls technology offers high performance and intelligent features such as remote diagnostics systems and sophisticated adhesion control for improved traction and hauling efficiency on steel rails

The new locomotives will be built at Bombardier's manufacturing site in Kassel, Germany. Shipments are scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2009.

"An important factor in this follow on order is the excellent reliability of the 29 ALP-46 locomotives, as well as the high quality and on-time delivery of the product," said Edmund Schlummer, President of Bombardier's Locomotive Division.

NJ TRANSIT is an established customer of Bombardier and the third largest provider of public transit in the United States. In addition to ALP-46 locomotives, Bombardier has supplied more than 300 Comet II, III and IV push-pull commuter cars to the transit agency, and is currently delivering 234 MultiLevel commuter rail cars. Bombardier was also a member of the consortium that designed and built the turnkey River LINE light rail system between Camden and Trenton, New Jersey. Bombardier Transportation now operates and maintains the system under a contract with NJ TRANSIT.

## NYC's First Bus Rapid Transit Line Debuts in The Bronx



L-R: Assembly Members José Rivera and Adriano Espaillat, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, DOT Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, MTA CEO Lee Sander and Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión at Fordham Plaza today

Mayor Michael Bloomberg this morning unveiled details of the city's first Bus Rapid Transit project, called "Select Bus Service," to debut on the Bx12 line, which follows 207th Street in Northern Manhattan and Fordham Road and Pelham Parkway in the Bronx.

Bloomberg and other officials also tied expansion of the program to the implementation of congestion pricing.

Connecting Inwood to Co-Op City, the Bx12 SBS corridor will allow riders to prepay the fare at vending machine stations along the line. Transit customers will get a receipt, to be displayed upon request to "enforcement personnel aboard buses," according to a media release. At first, vending stations will only accept MetroCards and cash as payment, though credit card functionality will eventually be added.



Speaking at Fordham Plaza and flanked by Department of Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, MTA Executive Lee Sander, and electeds from the Bronx and Northern Manhattan, Bloomberg outlined key components of SBS service. In addition to prepayment of fares, the corridors will feature:

- More buses (the Bx12 line will have 10 additional buses running during peak hours, Bloomberg said)
- Additional service hours
- Boarding at front and back doors
- Fewer stops
- Transit Signal Priority, a system that keeps signal lights green, and quickens the cycle of changing red signals back to green, to allow buses to move through intersections more smoothly
- Terracotta colored bus lanes, with stepped up enforcement to keep cars out
- Specially designed "branded" SBS buses, and branded stations with new shelters. The Bx12 SBS will replace the line's current limited-stop service on June 29. Bloomberg said the development of other corridors -- including First and Second Avenues in Manhattan, Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn, and Hyland Boulevard on Staten Island -- depend on getting congestion

pricing through the City Council and state Legislature. This point was echoed by Sadik-Khan, who described SBS as "almost like a surface subway system."

During a brief Q&A with reporters, Sander characterized MTA service improvement delays caused by slumping real estate returns as a "blip," and encouraged a long-term view. On the same subject, Bloomberg said of yesterday's announcement: "I think what it shows is there is never enough money to do everything."

Bloomberg pledged to do "everything [he] legally can" to ensure that all pricing revenues are used for transit capital projects even after his second term ends.

Also on hand were Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión and state Assembly Members José Rivera and Adriano Espaillat, all supporters of congestion pricing. Espaillat, who represents Northern Manhattan, cited the success of Bogotá Bus Rapid Transit, and said he sees no reason it can't be replicated in New York. The "salsarengue bus," as Espaillat called the Bx12, referring to the music favored in the largely Dominican and Latino neighborhoods it serves, is the perfect place to start, he said.

The three also had strong sentiments for those who would cast congestion pricing as a "right-wing conspiracy," in the words of Carrión. Rivera said he has asked Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, an opponent of both the commuter tax and congestion pricing, what he is willing to contribute to the Bronx, which Rivera described as a border between Lower Manhattan and suburban car commuters. "I have yet to receive an answer," Rivera said.

"We're not afraid of park-and-ride," said Espaillat, whose district skirts the asthma-plagued South Bronx and includes "the poster child of buckling platforms" at Dyckman Street on the No. 1 line.

"This [congestion pricing] is not a bogey monster," Espaillat said. "This is a rational, practical solution to a very serious problem."

*Photos: Brad Aaron*