



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

JUNE 2008

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

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

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

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

• JUNE MEETING

The June meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on June 6, 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 slide presentation from April.

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 Launches Student Smart Card Test Program with Chicago Public Schools

04/10/08

The Chicago Transit Authority and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) are collaborating to test smart cards for high school students who take public transportation. The pilot program was presented to the Chicago Transit Board today and is part of CTA's continued commitment to provide a convenient travel environment for customers and improve overall service.

"CTA is pleased to partner with Chicago Public Schools to make traveling on CTA as convenient as possible for students," said CTA President Ron Huberman. "The smart card reduces the number of cards carried by CPS students

and makes it faster and easier to board, thereby helping improve travel times for all customers. Smart cards also help CTA cut down on administrative costs and further reduces the use of cash and wear and tear on fareboxes."

"Many of our students use the CTA to get to and from school each day, and the smart card test will give our students a chance to play an important role in improving their own commute," said Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan. "And because being on time for school every day is critical to our students' success, the smart card's tracking capabilities will help to keep our students safe and accountable."

The smart cards will be tested by approximately 1,900 students attending Carver Military Academy, 13100 S. Doty Avenue, and Prosser Career Academy, 2148 N. Long Avenue from May 1 through June 20.

Under the current process, CPS students carry their student identification cards; a paper or magnetic student riding permit which is used to prove eligibility to use a reduced fare card; and a reduced fare magnetic strip card to pay the actual fare when riding CTA. Students will receive smart cards that will combine all three into one card and eliminate the need to pay with cash.

Students may add value to the card at any CTA farecard vending machine or Touch-n-Go locations and will continue to pay the reduced fare of \$0.85 cents with an eligible transfer for \$0.15. The cards function like CTA's Chicago Card in that they are stored value cards, where the value is maintained on the card.

Students may use the cards during the same hours as currently used with student riding permits: Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) from 5:30 a.m. until 8 p.m. when school is in session.

CTA will evaluate the success of the smart card test and if it proves feasible will work with CPS in an effort to implement the program at other high schools.

In 2007, CTA provided approximately 97,000 reduced fare riding permits to students.

STATEMENT FROM PACE REGARDING CHICAGO ADA SERVICE ISSUES

April 3, 2008

Executive Director responds to telephone and reservation problems, promises solution.

In response to major problems with the telephone reservation and dispatching system employed by Pace on its Chicago ADA paratransit service for registered persons with disabilities as part of a set of service changes, Executive Director T.J. Ross issued the following statement:

"Pace shares the frustration experienced by many of our Chicago ADA passengers since implementation of our new service model on March 28. We take the comfort and needs of our passengers very seriously, and we sincerely apologize to each rider who has encountered problems.

"We have traced the problem to the computerized trip reservation system. The makers of the system assured us that we would be able to manage the entire city's service using it, but when the final service carrier was brought online, the system became overwhelmed and crashed. After several attempts to make adjustments and overhaul the system, we continue to encounter problems.

"We have developed a plan to temporarily correct many of these issues while the reservation system is modified. We are converting one carrier to a separate reservation system until a permanent solution is found. The other carriers operating service in Chicago did not encounter capacity issues before the final carrier was brought online, so they will continue to use the coordinated reservation system.

"Computerizing the dispatch system was intended to be an improvement for passengers in that they could reserve trips more quickly and easily than before. Unfortunately, it has created more problems to date than it has solved. We are working around the clock to correct these problems and will continue to do so until a permanent solution is found.

"Again, I sincerely apologize to all passengers who have experienced problems with the new system and assure them that we are doing everything we can to resolve these issues."

PACE TAKES FANS OUT TO THE BALLGAME

Express service to Cubs and White Sox games is a home run for fans

One of the few things that Cubs and White Sox fans can agree on is that traffic hassles coupled with the high costs for parking are enough to ruin a trip to the ballpark. Pace offers a great alternative: express service direct to Wrigley Field and U.S. Cellular Field from free, convenient park & ride lots. Pace Board Chairman Richard Kwasneski said, "These routes are a safe, cost effective, and stress-free alternative to driving to the game."

Pace's U.S. Cellular Field Express is available from six departure points in the south and southwest suburbs in the following locations:



- Markham: Pace South Division, 2101 W. 163rd Place
- Tinley Park: Southtown Star, 6901 W. 159th Street
- Oak Lawn: Metra Station, 9525 S. Tulley Avenue
- Palos Heights: Metra Station, 11451 Southwest Highway
- Bolingbrook: Pace Park & Ride, 120 E. Old Chicago Drive/IL-53
- Burr Ridge: Pace Park & Ride, McClintock Drive & Lincolnshire Drive



The Wrigley Field Express operates direct to the Friendly Confines from the Northwest Transportation Center in Schaumburg and from Yorktown Center in Lombard. Service to games at both stadiums is available for all night, weekend, and holiday games, as well as daytime weekday games from June through August. The U.S. Cellular Field Express will also operate for the first home game on April 7. The fare is \$3.00 each way per person, paid in exact cash fare on the bus. For more information regarding the Wrigley Field Express and the U.S. Cellular Field Express including departure times, visit

www.pacebus.com or call the RTA Travel Information Center at 836-7000 from any area code.

2 Killed, 21 Hurt When Tractor-Trailer Slams Into Chicago Train Station

April 26, 2008 8:16 a.m. EST

Linda Young - AHN Editor

Chicago, IL (AHN) - A tractor-trailer ran down the exit ramp of the Dan Ryan Expressway into a crowded bus shelter and then into the escalator of a Chicago Transit Authority rail station during Friday rush hour killing two people and injuring 21 others.

Two women who were walking near the Cermak-Chinatown Red Line station on the city's South Side were declared dead on the scene and 21 people were taken to area hospital, fire department officials said.

Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford said 11 of the injured were in critical condition, including four children, according to AP reports.

Witnesses reported hearing the screech of brakes and grinding metal before the semitruck struck and destroyed the bus stop with a loud boom before continuing on to strike the escalator, according to Sun Times reports.

Chicago police are investigating the accident. The truck driver was treated at a hospital and released into police custody in handcuffs, but has not been arrested or charged, according to reports.

Officials have not released the names of the dead.

Transit Authority officials examined the station and determined it was not structurally damaged but the stairs were significantly damaged and trains won't stop at that station until further notice.

Traffic, parking top streetcar questions

Business First of Columbus - by Jeff Bell Business First

A big believer in mass transit, PM Gallery owner Maria Galloway doesn't have a problem with the idea that streetcars may someday hum just yards from her Short North shop's front door.

She hopes the electric streetcar line proposed for High Street will be the precursor for a light rail system she thinks is overdue in Columbus.

But Galloway, who has operated her art and fine crafts gallery for 28 years, isn't ready to jump on the bandwagon for the 2.8-mile line that would connect downtown Columbus with **Ohio State University**. Like other business operators along High Street, she needs answers about the project's effects on parking and traffic before offering her endorsement.

"The consensus," she said, "is we like the idea but ... questions, questions, questions."

City officials are working on answers, including whether the streetcar line would run down the center of High Street or in the curb lanes headed north and south, said Mark Kelsey, Columbus' public service director.

An engineering study needs to be completed to address that issue and others involving traffic flow, he said. Such a study won't begin until after city officials determine whether Kelsey's department, the **Central Ohio Transit Authority** or some other agency would oversee engineering and construction, Kelsey said.

That decision should come in 60 to 90 days.

Sharing lanes

Mayor Michael Coleman wants construction to begin in 2010 on the projected \$103 million project so the streetcar line could be operating by the city's bicentennial celebration in 2012.

To get there, the administration will need **City Council** to approve \$2 million for design and engineering work as well as legislation to OK some of the financing plan unveiled by the mayor's Streetcar Working Group. Among the funding proposals are using parking meter revenue and 4 percent surcharges on off-street parking and tickets to sports and entertainment events in the area to be served by the streetcar line.

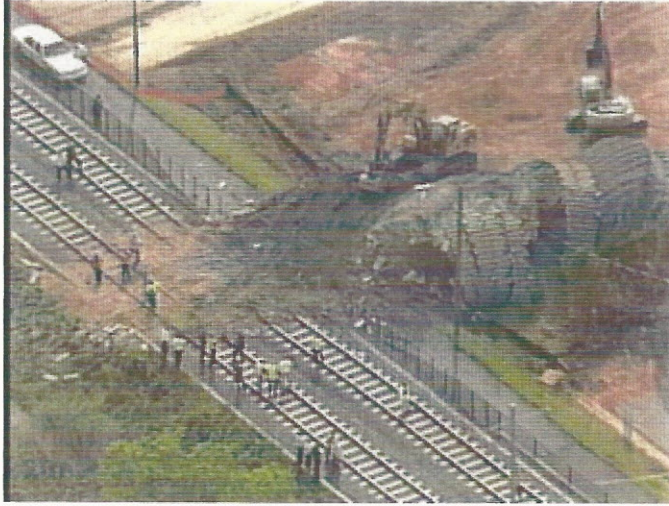
On the traffic front, streetcars would need to run on two of the five lanes along High Street. Kelsey said cars, trucks and buses could use the streetcar lanes as well, much like they're allowed to use COTA bus lanes.

Light rail back on regular schedule

Charlotte Observer

Posted on Sat, Apr. 19, 2008

Charlotte's light-rail system is operating normally today, a spokeswoman said this morning, a day after a silo being dismantled for a new condo development collapsed next to the track.



WCNC STAFF

Silo collapse shuts down Lynx light rail line near Remount Road.

After a frantic afternoon Friday in which buses were used to shuttle passengers around the accident site, the Charlotte Area Transit System reopened the northbound track early Friday night and the southbound track before 11 p.m. That allowed trains to operate the length of the 9.6-mile Lynx Blue Line.

CATS officials worked under lights Friday to clear the southbound track of dirt and debris so they could assess the damage.

There was a small kink in the northbound rails, but CATS used a bulldozer to nudge the track to its correct position, with a piece of wood acting as buffer between the bulldozer's bucket and the rail.

CATS managed to also straighten the southbound rails. There was no damage to the communications system that's embedded along the track, as originally feared.

Two engineers from Delta Railroad, which installed the track, were flying to Charlotte Friday night to inspect the track today, said Donald Gillis of Atlanta-based Archer Western, which built the Lynx.

The 80-foot silo crashed around 3:45 p.m. near both sections of track north of the New Bern station. No one was hurt, but the accident forced CATS to use "bus bridges" to get people home.

Trolley joining Lynx on light-rail tracks

After 2-year break, CATS to resume trips by streetcar replicas

STEVE HARRISON

sharrison@charlotteobserver.com

Charlotte's trolley, which some credit with laying the groundwork for light rail, will resume service again Sunday after a two-year hiatus.



Three replica trolleys will run from uptown to the historic South End, using the same tracks as the Lynx Blue Line.

The trolleys are a tourist draw, a link to the city's past when streetcars were a key way to get around. But the trolley service will also have some practical benefit: In the middle of the day, the trolleys will mean more frequent service from uptown to the South End.

The nonprofit Charlotte Trolley began using a restored streetcar on a small rail spur in the South End in the late 1990s. The city later expanded the service through uptown to 9th Street, and the Charlotte Area Transit System began operating the trolley. Service stopped in 2006 for light-rail construction.

Ron Tober, Charlotte Trolley's executive director, headed CATS before he stepped down at the end of last year. He said the trolley helped convince Mecklenburg voters in 1998 to approve the half-cent sales tax for mass transit. That tax funds most of CATS' budget.

Tober said Sunday's 1 p.m. celebration at the Atherton Mill Trolley Barn will be a "soft opening."

The trolley will operate at first on weekends before running on weekdays in mid-May. The Charlotte Area Transit System, which operates light rail and will run the trolley, wants to ensure that the introduction of the trolley doesn't disrupt the Lynx, which has so far been on schedule.

"We're doing dry runs right now," said CATS chief operating officer Jim Zingale. "We're hoping to finalize how long that trip will take."

A one-way trolley fare will be \$1.30 -- the same as a Lynx ticket and bus fare. At trolley stations that aren't served by the Lynx and don't have ticket machines -- Atherton Mill, Tremont, Morehead and 9th Street -- passengers can buy a ticket on board.

The operating budget for the Lynx is about \$11.5 million. The trolley budget is about \$200,000.

If the Lynx is extended to the University City area next decade, Charlotte would have a 21-mile rail line, and there might not be time or space to run the trolleys, Tober said. He said that if CATS builds a streetcar as planned, the trolley replicas could operate on those tracks.

CATS originally planned to use the historic No. 85 trolley car, which was refurbished with private donations and then improved again with taxpayer dollars. But the federal government said the 80-year-old trolley car couldn't withstand a collision with the Lynx trains, relegating the No. 85 to a ceremonial role.

The No. 85 car was built in Charlotte in 1927 and used until 1938, when it was retired as part of a "Goodbye to Trolleys" celebration.

The No. 85 will be a part of Sunday's celebration, making a round trip from Atherton Mill to uptown and back.

It may then reside in the new trolley museum, which is being built near the Bland Street light-rail station.

Transit chief: Light-rail project must go forward

Cost overruns beset N. Shore extension

Friday, April 18, 2008

By Joe Grata, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Port Authority Chief Executive Officer Steve Bland says not finishing the 1.2-mile light-rail extension to the North Shore "is not a viable option."

Cost overruns on the \$435-million project have not yet reached a crisis point, he told members of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editorial board in a meeting yesterday.

Mr. Bland's comments came in the wake of a \$48.9 million apparent low bid on Tuesday for the second contract on the project -- building the concrete and steel shell of a new Gateway Center Station Downtown. The bid was well beyond the \$25 million-\$30 million range of engineering estimates. That will leave the authority with

\$147 million of uncommitted funds for the final four contracts.

The discussion of project costs also came on the same day that the Port Authority announced its expensive German boring machine will be shut down for up to six weeks.

The machine, which is sitting about 10 feet away from the edge of the Allegheny River underneath the North Shore, has been stalled because pipes that carry the excavated soil out of the tunnel have become clogged, said Winston Simmonds, the authority's rail operations engineering officer.

Contractors are in the process of shoring up the soil in front of the machine with concrete grouting before entering the machine's excavation chamber to find out what has caused the blockage, he said.

The delay may push back the drilling schedule by a couple weeks at most, he said, because the machine had been moving at a faster pace than original estimates. He did not know whether it would add any additional costs to the project's total.

The authority's \$147 million in uncommitted funds includes about \$18 million remaining in a fund for unforeseen circumstances and cost overruns.

Mr. Bland said the authority would have a better grasp of the situation after May 14, when bids are to be opened on another major component -- building the shell of Allegheny Station on the North Shore plus the structure for an elevated stretch of the line northwest of PNC Park.

"The expenditures stretch out through 2011, so we have time," Mr. Bland said. "We're concerned but not surprised because we're seeing this type of cost escalation across the country."

Mr. Bland said such soaring costs do not bode well for future expansion projects.

"This seriously delays looking at the next major plan," like extending light-rail to Oakland, an idea suggested by county Chief Executive Dan Onorato and a transportation task force he has assembled.

The tunnel boring machine uses a clay and water slurry to pressurize and soften the earth as it moves forward, and it was the pipes that carry the slurry and excavated material back toward the North Shore that became clogged starting a week ago.

Mr. Simmonds said workers noticed pieces of wood coming back through the pipes, so one theory is that the machine hit wooden fill material in the riverbank.

The machine will bore parallel tunnels beneath the river to carry trains back and forth between Downtown and

the North Shore. That work is part of the initial, \$156.5 million contract, which is 40 percent completed.

On other subjects discussed with Post-Gazette editors, Mr. Bland said:

- The authority is finalizing a marketing plan to sell naming rights for the North Shore Connector, saying there's precedent in the transit industry. For example, Cleveland Clinic has purchased the naming rights for a new bus rapid transit facility in Cleveland.
- By fall, the authority will take the first step toward a "smart card" fare collection and tracking system by soliciting bids for hardware for the estimated \$30 million-\$35 million project. The high-tech system would be 80 percent federally funded.
- By the end of the month, the treasury department will be caught up with processing and depositing barrels of money that had gone uncounted because of personnel shortages. Nearly \$1 million had been sitting in the barrels, a situation that brought criticism when disclosed in February.

Joe Grata can be reached at jgrata@post-gazette.com.
First published on April 18, 2008 at 12:51 am

Breaks found on 14 more areas of light rail

Casey Newton
The Arizona Republic
Apr. 16, 2008 03:44 PM

New tests on the Valley's light-rail line found the number of damaged areas to be nearly double what was first thought, requiring at least 31 sections of rail to be replaced before opening day, Dec. 27.

Repairs are under way on the 20-mile starter line now under construction. The work follows a report that blamed the weakened steel on the use of torches to cut drainage openings.

Fixing the rails will cost more than \$600,000.

While Metro light rail said it would not pay the cost, it remains unclear who will be held responsible.



This section of the light rail near the 4400 block of East Washington Street in Phoenix was removed after cracks were found.

From December to January, Metro light-rail track inspectors found rail damage in 17 locations from central Phoenix to east Tempe, with gaps in the track as wide as 7 inches. Further tests have revealed another 14 areas that need to be replaced.

Metro CEO Rick Simonetta said he was relieved that more sections of rail did not need to be replaced.

"This is really good news," Simonetta said. "This could have been catastrophic."

Metro construction chief Brian Buchanan said cooling in the winter could lead to further cracking. The cold is thought to have caused the rails to break after having been weakened by torches.

"As we move into another weather cycle, we obviously may have some more breaks," Buchanan said.

Simonetta said the worst was over and that the system would still open on time and on budget.

Review panel provides reality check

Randall Denley, *The Ottawa Citizen*
Published: Thursday, April 17, 2008

At last, someone has brought forward a clear explanation for how a \$4-billion transit expansion can deliver enough benefit to justify its costs. Too bad it wasn't city councillors or city staff.

Instead, the fresh thinking comes from an outside panel of transit experts hired by the city to evaluate the transit proposal staff released yesterday. After only five days of examining our problems, the five experts from Canada, the United States and Britain have delivered the kind of insight into the link between transit and our city's development that sometimes only outsiders can bring.

Light rail should only serve areas inside the Greenbelt, they say. It shouldn't be used as a super-expensive way to enable more suburban sprawl. Even the bus transitway should not be extended to the far reaches of the suburbs. Instead, the transit experts say rail and streetcars should be used to create a denser, more urban city inside the Greenbelt. Rail shouldn't be extended to the suburbs for 20 years, they say, and then only if they become dense enough to justify it.

The city has become fixated on moving transit's share of the morning commute from 23 per cent to 30 per cent, but that alone doesn't deliver enough for the money, the review panel says.

The consultants foresee a city in which it will be easy to get around by transit at any time of the day and people inside the Greenbelt will actually be able to live without cars. To make that happen, the city will have to encourage dense residential and commercial

development near the proposed rail transit stations, the consultants say. They are skeptical of the city's developer-driven official plan, which predicts that 80 per cent of growth will be outside the Greenbelt. As we know, this kind of growth is costly to service.

The consultants' reminder of how a city ought to grow should be a reality check for city councillors, but many councillors and suburbanites see an entirely different role for rail. They are hoping for what amounts to a commuter train service to take people quickly from their suburban communities to downtown.

City staff have taken a middle position on this important issue, calling for rail to stop inside the Greenbelt for now, but offering the crowd-pleasing idea that it will eventually be pushed far into the suburbs. Some councillors were seizing on that idea yesterday and wondering why it couldn't be done now.

Getting the most benefit for the cost should be one of the central issues as councillors and the public consider the transit plan over the next five weeks. They weren't aided much by city staff's failure to release cost-benefit information this week. They say it will come in October, after councillors have approved the rail plan in principle.

The plan city staff recommended yesterday proposes light rail in a tunnel downtown, extending to Baseline Station in the west, Bowesville Station in the south and Blair Station in the east.

Those destinations are determined more by cost constraints than good planning, and staff's failure to anchor the transit plan solidly to the idea of a more sustainably planned city will make it easy for councillors to try to push rail farther out.

Yesterday's proposal is still a great step forward from the misconceived, and now rejected, transit plan that would have offered deluxe rail service to the lightly populated south, no real improvement to the east and west and no viable long-term solution downtown. The consultants' analysis of the new plan can be extrapolated and applied to the old plan, which would have failed on every rational count.

Despite that, some councillors and rail buffs are already fretting because councillors are being asked to approve something in principle without knowing every last detail, and they are especially concerned by the uncertainty of a plan that relies on a tunnel.

That misses the point. What's at issue now is where a transit expansion should go, and for what purpose. For that discussion, it's fair enough to assume that a downtown tunnel will be both affordable and feasible. It does not make sense to fault this plan because there is no Plan B behind it. Let's get a Plan A first.

Although Mayor Larry O'Brien was quick to say he had delivered on an election promise, the interesting battles

have yet to be fought. Councillors will push hard to get rail to the suburbs and the real tussle will come over who gets it first.

The key concept for councillors to remember is that this expensive new transit plan will only be justified if it can change our travel behaviour and development pattern, making the central part of our city one where people can live without cars. If it's all just to justify past and future suburban expansion, it's a bad way to spend public money.

Contact Randall Denley at 596-3756 or by e-mail, rdenley@thecitizen.canwest.com

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Growing Pains for a Deep-Sea Home Built of Subway Cars

SLAUGHTER BEACH, Del. — Sixteen nautical miles from the Indian River Inlet and about 80 feet underwater, a building boom is under way at the Red Bird Reef.

One by one, a machine operator has been shoving hundreds of retired New York City subway cars off a barge, continuing the transformation of a barren stretch of ocean floor into a bountiful oasis, carpeted in sea grasses, walled thick with blue mussels and sponges, and teeming with black sea bass and tautog.

"They're basically luxury condominiums for fish," Jeff Tinsman, artificial reef program manager for the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, said as one of 48 of the 19-ton retirees from New York City sank toward the 666 already on the ocean floor.

But now, Delaware is struggling with the misfortune of its own success.

Having planted a thriving community in what was once an underwater desert, state marine officials are faced with the sort of overcrowding, crime and traffic problems more common to terrestrial cities.

The summer flounder and bass have snuggled so tightly on top and in the nooks of the subway cars that Mr.

Tinsman is trying to expand the housing capacity. He is having trouble, however, because other states, seeing Delaware's successes, have started competing for the subway cars, which New York City provides free.

Crisscrossing over the reef, commercial pot fishermen keep getting their lines tangled with those of smaller hook-and-reel anglers, and the rising tension has led the state to ask federal marine officials to declare the area off limits to large commercial fishermen.

As the reef has become more popular, theft and sabotage of fishing traps and pots has more than doubled in the last several years, said Capt. David Lewis of the Delaware Bay Launch Service. "People now don't just steal the fish inside the pots out here, they've started stealing the pots, too," he said.

The reef, named after New York City's famous Redbird subway cars, now supports more than 10,000 angler trips annually, up from fewer than 300 in 1997. It has seen a 400-fold increase in the amount of marine food per square foot in the last seven years, according to state data.

Mr. Tinsman said his department was doing everything it could to expand the capacity, noting that last year, when subway cars were unavailable, he sank a 92-year-old tugboat and the YOG-93, a 175-foot decommissioned Navy tanker built in 1945 for the planned invasion of Japan. Fifty subway cars are due this month, he said.

"The secret is out, I guess," said Michael G. Zacchea, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority official in charge of getting rid of New York City's old subway cars.

Mr. Zacchea added that Delaware's prospects for expanding the reef looked grim because New York State has said it wanted all of the city's retired subway cars once the United States Army Corps of Engineers updates the state's reef permit this summer. Mr.

Zacchea said he would soon stop shipments out of state, saving perhaps \$2 million in transport costs. As a good faith gesture, the city probably will provide about 100 cars to Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey before out-of-state deliveries are halted.

While New York State works to get its permit in place, other states are pushing hard to get what they can from the city, Mr. Zacchea said.

Last month, for example, New Jersey, which stopped taking the cars in 2003 because of environmental concerns, asked the city for 600 of them.

Tim Dillingham, the executive director of the American Littoral Society, a coastal conservation group based in Sandy Hook, N.J., said natural rock and concrete balls were far safer and more durable materials for artificial reefs.

"Those materials also cost more, and we're sensitive to the realities of budget crunches in many states," Mr. Dillingham said.

The American Littoral Society and other environmental groups opposed the use of the Redbird cars because they have small levels of asbestos in the glue used to secure the floor panels and in the insulation material in the walls.

State and federal environmental officials approved the use of the Redbirds and other cars for artificial reefs in Delaware and elsewhere because they said the asbestos was not a risk for marine life and has to be airborne to pose a threat to humans.

Mr. Dillingham said his group had pushed New Jersey to use only New York City's cars, which have only stainless steel on the outside, contain less asbestos and are more durable. Delaware, which oversees nine artificial reef sites in state waters and five, including Red Bird Reef, in

federal waters, was the first state to get subway cars from New York City, in August 2001.

In the last several years, the reefs have drawn swift open-ocean fish, like tuna and mackerel that use the reefs as hunting grounds for smaller prey. Sea bass like to live inside the cars, while large flounder lie in the silt that settles on top of the cars, said Mr. Tinsman, the Delaware official.

States have experimented with other types of artificial reef materials, including abandoned automobiles, tanks, refrigerators, shopping carts and washing machines.

Mr. Tinsman particularly favors the newer subway cars with stainless steel on the outside to create reefs. "We call these the DeLoreans of the deep," he said.

Subway cars in general, he said, are roomy enough to invite certain fish, too heavy to shift easily in storms and durable enough to avoid throwing off debris for decades.

"The one problem I see with them," Mr. Tinsman said, "is that just like the DeLoreans, there are only a limited number."

Waterfront streetcar likely won't roll again for a decade

**Metro still needs a maintenance barn, and viaduct plans are getting in the way. By LARRY LANGE
P-I REPORTER**

Seattle's vintage waterfront streetcar, mothballed for more than two years and expected to be running again by now, probably won't return for another decade.

And if it did, it's unclear where it would go.

The 1.6-mile line, popular with tourists, was shut down in late 2005 to make way for the Olympic Sculpture Park amid expectations that it would return in just over two years. That hinged in large part on a developer's proposal to add a maintenance barn to a new building on Occidental Avenue South in Pioneer Square.

But that development has stalled, and Metro Transit's director has told developer Greg Smith that his agency is looking for other barn sites.

Metro General Manager Kevin Desmond said his agency still wants to operate the waterfront line, but it had expected a new facility in place by now. In an April 2 letter to Smith, Desmond said "our planning assumptions have not materialized."

The county had planned to approve a purchase and sale agreement for the barn almost a year ago, Desmond said in his letter.

"Now, even under the most optimistic scenario, it does not appear that the maintenance facility can be completed before 2010," and initial construction work to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct begins next year.

"Construction on or above Alaskan Way is scheduled to start no later than 2012, thus preventing the streetcar operation until the project is completed in about 2018," Desmond's letter said. "Given our own timelines and commitments, the county must begin looking for alternative sites."

In an interview, Desmond said Metro is disappointed that the arrangement hasn't worked out.

The price for the facility at Smith's development has risen, though Desmond would not discuss by how much.

Smith could not be reached Friday for comment.

The waterfront line, using vintage streetcars imported from Australia, opened in 1982 after a long campaign by former Seattle City Councilman George Benson to bring the streetcar to the area. They were a tourist draw but have been stored in a warehouse since the maintenance barn was closed.

Desmond said that since they have been mothballed, summer ridership on the diesel buses that have substituted for the trolleys has declined.

Officials said Friday that there's no active search for another maintenance site at the moment, and talk now isn't just about the waterfront streetcar. Looming viaduct replacement work is expected to shut down the line until that project is done, putting off a decision about any waterfront line. Also, an expansion of the streetcar system is possible; that could move the line to First Avenue.

And Sound Transit officials are considering building a streetcar line heading east on South Jackson Street and up Broadway to First Hill as a connector to its light rail system. Voters rejected a ballot measure last fall that would have built that connection, but Sound Transit is considering resubmitting it in a smaller package this year.

There's some hope that the waterfront line will eventually reappear. Desmond said state officials have promised to replace the existing tracks once the viaduct-replacement

work is done. He said the county will keep in its budget the \$7 million it had committed to pay for most of the maintenance facility in Smith's development. The city and the Port of Seattle committed an additional \$1 million each.

City Councilman Richard McIver also is asking if new streetcars could be maintained in a barn built for the South Lake Union streetcar line.

"The circumstances have changed and there are a lot more balls in the air," said Marty McOmber, spokesman for Mayor Greg Nickels.

James Kelley, president of the Urban League of Seattle and co-founder of the Seattle Streetcar Alliance, said he was saddened by changes with the Occidental Avenue development, and his group will help find another location as part of a new system.

The alliance plans a May 13 session with businesses and landowners to discuss six other possible streetcar routes, to gauge their support. That session will come one week after a City Council transportation committee discussion of an enlarged network.

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NSU will greenlight light rail ... at a cost

By Debbie Messina
The Virginian-Pilot
© April 12, 2008

NORFOLK

Norfolk State University wants the city to purchase its president's home and build a parking deck near campus.

The requests are part of a wish list submitted to the city in a letter dated March 26. They are some of the most expensive ideas offered by NSU to resolve an impasse with the city and Hampton Roads Transit over the light rail line under construction next to the campus.

No price tags are available for the university's proposals. However, city officials said the items are not in the project's \$232.1 million budget.

The 7.4-mile starter rail, which would run from the Eastern Virginia Medical Center through downtown to the city line at Newton Road, is already under construction. Work stopped briefly a couple weeks ago because the university had not given contractors access through NSU property. It resumed after temporary permission was granted.

The city and university now have less than two weeks to work out their differences to avoid costly project delays.

Security, parking, aesthetics, vibrations and flooding are among the sticking points.

NSU officials would not say which, if any, of their requests are negotiable.

As currently proposed, the light rail tracks and rail maintenance yard would disturb President Carolyn Meyers' privacy and quiet enjoyment of her residence, said Bobby Norris Vassar, the rector of NSU's board. Passengers would be able to peer into her backyard and pool because the track is elevated, he said.

NSU wants the city to buy the president's home and transfer the deed back to the university so the house can be used as a student welcome center. The college would then build or purchase another home for its president.

Norfolk Mayor Paul Fraim said he wouldn't support the request under any circumstances.

"I don't think we could use public dollars for that purpose," he said.

NSU officials also would like the city to build a parking deck over a university-owned parking lot adjacent to the Ballentine Boulevard station instead of sharing 97 of the school's spaces there, as HRT's plans call for.

The school can't afford to share because the college already has a shortage of 1,600 spaces, NSU officials said. Shared parking also poses security risks, they said.

Other wish list items include:

- Relocating HRT's access to the rail maintenance yard. The plan calls for reopening Norchester Avenue at the east end of campus, which NSU said could jeopardize security because of the added traffic.
- Installing noise and sight barriers between the rail and the campus.
- Indemnifying the university for any damage caused by the rail construction.

City Manager Regina V.K. Williams said she's optimistic that NSU's concerns can be worked out in a meeting with all the key players.

"I would think there are other solutions," Williams said.

Some changes already have been made to address the university's concerns, including redesigning the maintenance yard and repositioning the Brambleton Avenue station, HRT spokesman James Toscano said.

HRT officials said they do not know yet how the lack of a resolution with NSU would affect the project.

The city set a target date of April 21 to verbally resolve the issues. All agreements need to be formalized by

June 15 to avoid more construction stoppages, although a few will have to happen sooner, Williams said.

Much of the flap originates from an agreement signed by NSU and HRT leaders in 2004 outlining how the rail line will interact with the campus.

HRT planned the rail line based on that agreement.

Since then, NSU's leadership and vision have changed. Meyers and Vassar said the agreement is not binding and serves only as guidance.

He noted that the last line of the agreement reads: "This Memorandum of Understanding may require modification in the future and is intended to reflect the understandings between the parties as of the date of this Memorandum of Understanding."

Williams said the city regards the agreement as a commitment "to work with us" on the "detail and specificity," she said.

"If you come in and take something over, even if you think it's a bad agreement, you have to honor the agreement," said Councilman W. Randy Wright, who has fought for light rail in Norfolk.

Vassar said NSU has expressed its concerns over the past two years.

While the two parties have communicated in letters and meetings during that time, the city and HRT didn't concentrate on resolving the issues until recently — after winning federal approval and money in October.

"Because that was the focus, there were things that were not worked on," Williams said.

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Mid-American Coaches adds MCIs to fleet with four new J4500 models

SCHAUMBURG, IL — April 18, 2008 — Mid-American Coaches and Tours, a leading operator near St. Louis, has taken delivery of four MCI® J4500 coaches. Mid-American's new J4500s are equipped with clean-diesel Cummins engines and ZF ASTronic transmissions as well as Blaupunkt entertainment systems, 110-volt outlets and WiFi capabilities.

Mid-American has a fleet of 22 coaches. Its new J4500 models are the first MCI models the company has purchased in more than a decade. "The MCI J4500s are going to represent us really well," said Roger Jones, president of the Washington, Missouri, company. "I talked to the driver who took the first one on its first charter, and he spoke very well of it. The passengers were excited by it as well."



Mid-American was founded as the Washington Union St. Louis Bus Company in 1927. Roger Jones' father, Ralph, bought the business in 1957. "I thought I'd gone to heaven — my dad bought a bus company," said Roger Jones. The name was changed to Mid-American after the senior Jones acquired another company, Louisiana Motor Coaches, in 1960. The Joneses started building on the tour and charter side of the business, eventually leaving route service behind entirely in 1993. At 88, Ralph Jones is still active in the company as chairman of the board, with day-to-day operations led by Roger Jones and his brother, Dennis.

Mid-American employs about 60 people and runs a tight ship at its own maintenance facility. "Dad grew up on a farm and learned how important it was to keep mechanical equipment in top shape," said Roger Jones. "He's carried on that philosophy in this business. We run a top maintenance department."

Mid-American is a member of the ABA, IMG and UMA. More information on the company is available at www.mid-americancoaches.com.

In its 70th year, Kobussen Trailways goes green with two new clean-diesel luxury MCI® J4500 coaches

SCHAUMBURG, IL — April 7, 2008 — Kobussen Trailways, based in Kaukauna, Wisconsin, has taken delivery of two new MCI J4500 coaches equipped with Cummins engines and Allison transmissions. These are the first low-emission, clean-diesel coaches for Kobussen, which plans to take delivery of two more J4500s at the end of the year. Kobussen is also the first motor coach operator in its area to embrace the new engine technology, following the EPA's 2007 mandate to lower particulate matter (black smoke) by 90 percent.

"We're dedicated to doing our part to protect the environment," says Dan Kobussen, a member of the family-owned transportation company now in its third generation of leadership. With its high passenger capacity and design, the motor coach is the most energy-efficient means of travel. Data supports that motor coaches use the least fuel and produce the lowest

amount of CO₂ per passenger mile of any mode of modern transportation, including trains. "The advanced technology makes the motor coach even more eco-friendly, and we're glad to offer these luxurious new models to our customers throughout Northeastern Wisconsin," adds Kobussen, who leads the company with his brother Joe Kobussen.



Kobussen's new J4500s also offer top-of-the-line passenger amenities including a Blaupunkt entertainment system with 15-inch flat-screen monitors along with the model's patented spiral entryway for easy boarding, and tiered theatre-style seating that gives every passenger a scenic view.

Founded in 1938 by Elwood (Goldie) Kobussen, a dairy farmer and trucker, Kobussen began as Kaukauna Bus Service, operating school buses. The company changed its name to Kobussen in 1976 and branched into the luxury motor coach business in 1983. Today, Kobussen, under the slogan of *"Family pride in every ride,"* operates a fleet of 12 coaches, including six super luxury MCI® E4500 coaches. All together the company employs about 400 people with operations in Neenah, Oshkosh, Oconto and Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. To learn more, visit www.Kobussen.com.

Blue Grass goes green with two new clean-diesel MCI® J4500s

SCHAUMBURG, IL — April 7, 2008 — Blue Grass Tours, the oldest tour company in Lexington, Kentucky, has added two new coaches to its fleet. The clean-diesel MCI J4500s, delivered in early March, feature Cummins engines and ZF Astronic transmissions.



"Our policy is to put the nicest-looking coaches on the road. The J4500 is a good-looking coach, and we like the service we get from MCI," said Wallace Jones Jr., owner of the company since 1978. The company began in 1962. Over the past 30 years, Blue Grass Tours has grown from a one-van tour operation to a successful 16-coach tour and charter business. MCI models make up most of the 23-vehicle fleet, which now includes seven J4500s. The company, which employs about 65 people, also has its own garage with three full-time mechanics.

The company's success should come as no surprise. Around Lexington, the name "Wallace Jones" is synonymous with winning. Jones' father, also named Wallace Jones but more commonly known as "Wah Wah" Jones, is a sports legend. A college all-sports star, he was all-SEC in three sports, starred on an NCAA-championship team, played on the basketball gold-medal team in the 1948 Olympics, played in the NBA for the Indianapolis Olympians and was even drafted by the Chicago Bears. Wallace Jones Jr. had his own sports fame, playing baseball for the Atlanta Braves operation and several minor-league teams.

For more information about Blue Grass Tours, visit www.bluegrasstours.com

International Stage Lines adds two clean-diesel J4500s to all-MCI fleet

SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 31, 2008 — International Stage Lines, Richmond, British Columbia, has taken delivery of its first new J4500s with clean-diesel technology. The coaches are equipped with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, ZF ASTronic transmissions and Blaupunkt entertainment systems.

Brad Sidjak, director of sales and marketing, is pleased about going green. Pointing to the growth of travel sites that let travelers assess their carbon footprint and buy carbon credits, he believes the clean-diesel J4500s can help reach eco-conscious travelers. "Consumers are becoming very well-educated on carbon emissions. They are more aware of the impact their vehicles have, and I think it's a great time for the coach industry to demonstrate its desire to be part of the solution. We're impressed with the clean diesel, and I see a great advantage to promoting it."

The new J4500s join an all-MCI fleet of 40 coaches. Twelve of them are J4500s, the industry's most popular tour coach. "We choose MCI because of the reliability of the MCI product," said Sidjak. "The J is a very modern-looking coach, and our customers are pleased with them. Everyone loves those buses."

Founded in 1978 by George Pullman and Robert W. Myhre, International Stage Lines employs about 85 people in its offices and maintenance facilities. The Vancouver-area company, which transports more than a million passengers a year, specializes in charter coach

services for schools, sports teams and groups, airport transfers and corporate travel.



High-profile clients have included the Canadian Figure Skating Association, and International Stage Lines was chosen to help serve during the royal visit that coincided with the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

International Stage Lines prides itself on its uniformed, highly trained drivers as well as an overall commitment to excellence in product and services. International Stage Lines is a member of NTA, SYTA, Tourism Vancouver, Tourism Whistler and Motorcoach Canada. More information can be found at www.islbus.com or www.icctours.com.

TravelLynx takes delivery of 11 MCI® D4505 models

SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 18, 2008— TravelLynx Transportation Services, a tour and charter operator based in Cocoa, Florida, has taken delivery of 11 MCI D4505 coaches. "They're the right bus for our operation. It's a model that's always held its value," said Bill Moberg, president of TravelLynx, which also has a facility in Daytona Beach.



With about 40 motor coaches as well as smaller vehicles, TravelLynx provides charter services to Florida and other states as well as shuttle services for airports in Orlando, Melbourne and Dayton. In addition to its

transportation services, it maintains a full repair facility that services coaches, RVs and trucks. Thanks to rigorous maintenance — and careful model selection — TravelLynx keep most of its coaches for 10 years or more. The company likes to make large orders when it comes time to make fleet changes.

Its association with MCI goes back about 30 years, almost as long as the company has been in business. "We've always been happy with MCI," said Moberg, who runs the company with his brother, Karl. "We've gotten great support, and the team was very helpful during the sale and purchase." TravelLynx was founded by their father nearly 40 years ago.

For more information about TravelLynx, visit www.travelynx.net.

Daimler Buses Awarded a 60-Bus Order from Long Island Bus with a Confirmed Option for 40 Additional Buses

Oriskany, N.Y. (April 17, 2007) — Daimler Buses North America was awarded an initial order for 60 Orion VII Next Generation Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) transit buses for The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Long Island Bus, and further received confirmed options for 40 buses.

"We are very pleased to once again be selected by Long Island Bus to be their transit bus provider for their next delivery of buses," said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for Daimler Buses North America. "Most important with this current order is Long Island Bus' move to low floor buses, which we look forward to working closely and assisting them in introducing this important new technology to their customers. This order also complements the 850 unit order which we received from New York City Transit, Long Island's sister agency at NY MTA."

Serving approximately 96 Long Island communities, the MTA Long Island Bus provides convenient service throughout Nassau County, Western Suffolk County and into Eastern Queens. In 1992, Long Island Bus began replacing its diesel bus fleet with buses operating using CNG fuel. Now, the Long Island Bus fleet is made up mostly of clean air, Orion CNG-fueled buses. Combined with the efforts of the New York City Transit division of the MTA, New York City and Nassau County have the cleanest public transportation in the United States outside of California.

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

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

The University of Georgia Receives the First Orion VII Next Generation Buses in the United States

ORISKANY, N.Y. (April 2, 2008) — After a successful launch to our Canadian customers, the first Orion VII Next Generation transit buses for our United States customers have been delivered to the University of Georgia (UGA) in Athens, Ga. The four Orion VII Next Generation buses were purchased as options from an existing order with UGA.



Introduced to the transit market in 2007, the Orion VII Next Generation by Daimler Buses North America uses the same proven platform of the Orion VII with a new, redefined, European-inspired exterior design and an improved ergonomic driver's area. The sleeker style provides a more modern design, giving the Next Generation plenty of curb appeal.

Specifically designed for university use, the new buses will continue to provide on-campus transit services to UGA's 32,000-plus students, seven days a week. Orion VII Next Generation transit buses have a high passenger capacity, wide doors, low-floor design and kneeling feature that make boarding the bus easy and fast while maintaining service efficiency.

"We have been so pleased with the reliability and durability of our Orion VII low-floor buses that we opted to purchase four

new Orion VII Next Generation transit buses for our transit service needs," said Ron Hamlin, campus transit Manager for UGA. "The Orion VII Next Generation allows us to load passengers safely and efficiently. The Orion buses have also proven to be very durable, keeping them running year after year."

The Orion VII Next Generation transit buses feature two entrance doors and wide aisles for easy passenger accessibility and traffic flow. Each bus has seating capacity for 37 passengers with additional space for standees. The UGA buses also feature a front door ramp to accommodate passengers with special needs and include two wheelchair positions.

The buses also deliver dependable service with a powerful diesel engine, a multiplexed electrical system that makes maintenance easier, and reliable heating and air conditioning that further enhances rider comfort.

"The Orion VII Next Generation is a great addition to a university bus fleet that prides itself on efficient, reliable transportation for its students," said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for Daimler Buses North America. "We're pleased to be a part of the positive student experience at the University of Georgia."

UGA operates one of the largest on-campus transit systems in the nation, transporting nearly nine million students per year. For more information on UGA, visit the Web site at www.transit.uga.edu.

Utah Trailways Takes Delivery of Four Setra S 417 Luxury Motorcoaches

Greensboro, N.C. (April 18, 2008) – Utah Trailways took delivery of four Setra S 417 luxury motorcoaches, giving the Salt Lake City company five in its fleet. Utah Trailways has been providing local and nationwide charter bus services and daily tours to The Wendover Nugget Casino, in Wendover, Nev., for over 26 years.

"The Setra S 417 allows us to offer a premium service to our clientele and embodies what luxury travel should be," said Dick Maben, President of Utah Trailways. "The design of the Setra S 417 and the luxurious appointments help enhance our business profile."



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. In addition to these fine appointments, all four of the Setra S 417 luxury motorcoaches received by Utah Trailways come equipped with satellite television, wireless internet and leather headrests, while two are fitted with a wheelchair lift. One of the motorcoaches has a back-up camera and a GPS system.

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.

"The combination of the Setra S 417's styling and its German engineering create added value, all the while supporting Utah Trailways' business goals," said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America. "From the moment Utah Trailways' customers step on board the Setra S 417, they will know they are traveling in style."

Nova Bus breaks ground on American bus assembly plant

Saint-Eustache, Quebec, April 16, 2008 — Following its decision to expand into the American public transit market, Nova Bus officially broke ground today on its new 135,740 sq. ft. bus assembly plant in Plattsburgh, NY.

Government officials were on hand in Banker Road Industrial Park to mark the "Breaking ground, building partnerships" event. Production at the Plattsburgh plant is slated to begin in early 2009, generating approximately 300 direct jobs for the region.

Nova Bus hopes to develop a strong presence in the United States and to build solid long-term partnerships with its clients, thanks to its full line of Nova LFS buses,

backed by a deep commitment to service and quality. Nova Bus' customer pledge sums it up well — "We Listen, You Drive."

Nova Bus President and CEO Gilles Dion spoke on behalf of all company colleagues, saying "Today represents a significant milestone in Nova Bus' history. We thank the Town of Plattsburgh and New York State for the warm welcome, and we look forward to building new partnerships with operators and to contributing to the development of American public transit."

"Nova Bus's strategy to expand into the North Country will allow this Canadian company to compete in the United States' transit bus market," New York Governor David Paterson said. "Along with the company's \$25 million private investment to construct the 135,740 square foot facility, 300 new jobs were pledged at this location, making it a great success story for the revitalization of the diverse Upstate economy."

Nova Bus is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Volvo Bus Corporation, the world's second largest motor coach and transit bus manufacturing group. Nova Bus is a leading manufacturer of city, suburban, and shuttle buses in North America, with its Nova LFS line of vehicles. Nova Bus is the first North American heavy-duty bus manufacturer in the urban transportation sector to achieve company-wide ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certifications. The company operates two plants in Canada.

PIONEER TRAILS ADDS VAN HOOL'S AND ABC M1235 TO FLEET

ABC Companies recently delivered Pioneer Trails, of Millersburg Ohio, two 2008 Van Hool's and an ABC branded M1235. The C2045E's are powered by Detroit Diesel Series 60's coupled to Allison B500's and increase this multifaceted company's fleet size to 11 coaches.

Dave Swartzentruber founded the company in 1984 and it now serves a unique market with a variety of different coach sizes. Day to day management of the family run company is now handled by his son, Wendyl.

Pioneer Trails is located in the heart of the world's largest Amish population, and operates a line run from their Northern Indiana and Ohio communities to their favored vacation spots in Central and Southwestern Florida. In addition to serving a number of local colleges and schools with charter service, they run custom tours all over the US and Canada.

ABC Senior Account Executive Pete Bachrach says, "I've spent time in business and social situations with Dave and Wendyl and they are truly quality people. If you want to see a company with high business and ethical standards, visit Pioneer Trails. Their people,

coaches and facility are first rate, and they run a great operation."



Pioneer Trails wanted to offer their customers a coach that was a bit nicer than what their competitors operated. Their first Van Hool was received enthusiastically by both customers and coach drivers, so they opted for two more.

CROSWELL ADDS 10 VAN HOOL'S TO VIP MOTORCOACH TOUR DIVISION

Croswell Bus Line's VIP Motorcoach Tour Division recently accepted delivery of 10 new Van Hool C2045E luxury coaches from ABC Companies.



These coaches are powered by Caterpillar C13 engines coupled to Allison automatic transmissions and are equipped to match the rest of Croswell's luxury fleet, with multi-monitor DVD systems, Hi-Fi Audio and CD Players, full fabric interiors, and reclining Amaya Torino seats with footrests.

Croswell has been providing high quality transportation for the Cincinnati area since 1922 and four generations have now been involved in managing the company. In 85 years, they have grown to 40 coaches, as well as 16 smaller vehicles, traveling to all of the US and Canada.

President John Croswell is past Chairman of IMG, and a member of the ABA board, in addition to winning a UMA

Vision Award. He feels that since deregulation, much of the coach industry hasn't been able to earn the kind of profits they deserve. The luxury segment of the market allows Croswell to meet financial goals while exceeding their customer's expectations. "That's good for the Croswell name, and even better for our clients," he pointed out. "We're proudly introducing the 2008 C2045's as the exclusive coaches in our VIP Motorcoach Tour Division. We think they accurately portray our long standing commitment to excellence."

ABC Senior Account Executive Pete Bachrach said, "Croswell is a great organization. Everyone from the drivers, to the shop, and all the way to top management, communicates well. They work as a team, and obviously enjoy each other. It shows and their customers love it."

Mr. Croswell said, "We've had Van Hool's in our fleet since 1990. They've become our most reliable and cost effective coaches. Our shop loves them, and the ride, quietness and overall comfort of the enhanced C2045 has made it our customer's favorite coach as well. The ABC organization completes the bridge we need to make Van Hool a successful part of our operations."

Nova Tours of Maryland joins Prevost

Sainte-Claire, Quebec, April 23rd—You could say that Nova Tours of Germantown, Maryland, is a "new old" company. Nova Tours has been in business 5 years, but with a seasoned veteran at the helm. That would be managing director Daniel Lee, who has 25 years of industry experience. Nova Tours has several older vehicles in its fleet, as well as a brand new 2008 Prevost H3-45. And it serves an established customer base with transportation and tours in both the Washington, D.C. metro area and throughout the eastern half of North America, including Canada. Nova Tours further distinguishes itself in the market by offering tour packages that feature English or Mandarin-speaking guides.

Nova Tours' recently acquired H3-45 is the company's first Prevost, and Daniel Lee is delighted with the choice. Having been in the business for many years, he was familiar with all kinds of motorcoaches and well aware of Prevost's reputation for quality. "They're known for their endurance, when well maintained," he says, "so this purchase represents good value for the long run."

Safety also was a vital concern. Lee is impressed by both the structural integrity built into Prevost vehicles and the company's dedication to ongoing engineering innovation. One feature he especially likes is the new coach's Electronic Stability Program. Nova Tours drivers, who also had input into the coach selection, are pleased to take the wheel of the gleaming new H3-45. And its luxurious comfort makes passengers happy, especially those on Nova Tours' longer trips, who may be on the road as many as 10 days.



Nova Tours' Managing Director, Daniel Lee and his wife Elaine with Tim Biltner, Prevost Regional Sales Manager, Mid-Atlantic US at the Prevost plant when taking delivery of their new Prevost H3-45.

Daniel Lee also enjoyed picking up the new coach at Prevost's Sainte-Claire plant, even though he traveled smack in the middle of the snowiest winter in Quebec's recorded history. While he had visited the area many times before, Lee recalls this was a particularly pleasant trip. Like most new customers, he toured the Prevost plant and, before taking the wheel to return home, also enjoyed Old Quebec City. "And the snow," he recalls, "was very beautiful—it was a spectacular experience!"

Low-floor buses to be replaced

Irwin Block, Montreal Gazette

Published: Thursday, May 01

MONTREAL - The Montreal Transit Corp. is replacing its first generation of 410 low-floor buses that were the bane of passengers and drivers alike.

The buses, purchased in 1996 from Quebec-based Nova Bus without having been tested on city streets, were plagued with mechanical faults and ramps that failed to offer promised wheelchair access.

A call for tenders has been issued and two other Canadian firms who build urban buses - Orion Bus Industries of Mississauga, Ont., and New Flyer Industries of Winnipeg, Man. - are expected to bid.

The new policy contrasts with the buy-Quebec bias in effect in 1996.

At the time, Quebec offered generous subsidies to municipalities that bought made-in-Quebec vehicles. An agreement with other provinces in 2001 did away with this practice.

By July, the Montreal Transit Corp. is expected to choose a manufacturer and test the vehicle on the road and in the lab, Carl Desrosiers, executive director (operations), said Thursday.

The estimated cost is \$200 million, half of which is to be paid by the provincial government.

But the actual cost will depend on whether the MTC decides to buy - financed over 16 years - or lease, over eight years, whichever is less expensive.

"We want to see what will be more advantageous for us and for our customers," Desrosiers told reporters Thursday.

All new buses, including longer articulated ones, will have "extremely reliable" hydraulically operated ramps, ensuring wheelchair access, he said.

These buses will be standard 12.2 metres long, seating 31 with room for an additional 44 standing.

They will run on bio-diesel fuel, a mix that includes five-per-cent recycled oil, which is cheaper and cleaner than full diesel.

The first 30 will be delivered by year's end, 170 next year and 210 in 2010, officials said.

As for the old buses, they will be traded in to the supplier of the new buses and their value factored into the deal, officials said.

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Northstar celebrates stop, looks at another

First station? Coon Rapids, where a groundbreaking was held. And Fridley hopes it will have a ceremony of its own.

By PAUL LEVY, Star Tribune

Last update: April 29, 2008 - 9:09 PM

Tremors from the ground-breaking Tuesday for Minnesota's first commuter-rail station could be felt from Coon Rapids into the future -- a future that could include a stop in Fridley.

While Coon Rapids celebrated with a groundbreaking ceremony for its Northstar station at Northdale Boulevard, south of Main Street, Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart said that possible surplus money from the Northstar project could be used toward completing a station in Fridley.

"It's contingent on our federal funding, and we'd have to get permission from Washington," said Erhart, chairman of the Northstar Corridor Development Authority. "But it's possible."

A \$10.6 million request for a Northstar light-rail station in Fridley was left out of the state bonding bill, but city officials still hope construction can begin on infrastructure for the station in May.

In December, the \$320 million Northstar line, which is to run from Minneapolis to Big Lake, received \$156.8 million in federal funding. The 41-mile commuter line is expected to open late next year, on schedule.

A groundbreaking for the station site in Big Lake is set for next week, and the groundbreaking for Elk River in August. Groundbreaking for an Anoka station is pending, Erhart said.

"This is a system that will continue and impact the entire metro area and, ultimately, the entire state of Minnesota," Erhart said.

"The commuter rail line is symbolic of how we have changed, how we work, how we go to school. Seniors will select housing in the proximity of these rail stations. This will stimulate a building spree. Buyers will want to live in the proximity of these stations, of this line."

Redlands gets look at Metrolink plans

Jesse B. Gill, Staff Writer

Article Launched: 04/25/2008 02:47:22 PM PDT

REDLANDS - Representatives of SANBAG (San Bernardino Associated Governments) were out in force at City Hall to give residents a sneak peak at their plans to bring Metrolink service to Redlands by 2015.

SANBAG representatives were joined Thursday night by representatives of the consulting firms being used to go through the steps in the long process to bring Metrolink to town.

"The whole purpose of the scoping meeting is to invite the public to come and take a look at we're doing with the project," said Mike Bair, director of transit and rail programs for SANBAG.

SANBAG plans to provide some sort of Metrolink service along a nine-mile stretch of the Redlands Subdivision railroad corridor, which would take passengers back and forth between the University of Redlands and downtown San Bernardino.

With the help of its consultants, SANBAG has recently begun an analysis of the alternatives and the conducting of an environmental impact report.

Bair said the two processes go hand in hand, as the environmental report will dictate which alternative will best suit the area.

In terms of bringing Metrolink service to Redlands, there are three alternatives. The first (and cheapest) would use 60-foot buses instead of a Metrolink train. The buses' routes would be dedicated, highways used only by the buses. They would provide service all day at either seven or two stations along the nine-mile stretch.

The second option is similar to the first, except a light transit train would be used instead of the buses. The light rail train would run all day long and also serve either

seven or two stations, depending on what SANBAG goes with.

The third option would use a full-sized Metrolink train, which would run only during peak hours and would stop at three stations at the most.

Mayor Pro Tem Pat Gilbreath, who has worked extensively with SANBAG to examine the process to get Metrolink in Redlands, said the third option would be impractical for Redlands.

"We are looking at the light rail," Gilbreath said. "A full-on Metrolink won't work because we'd have to totally replace all the track. The track for the light rail is so much less expensive."

Gilbreath also said the option to have as many as seven stops along the track also makes the light rail option attractive.

Redlands residents Joanna and Gordie Woo were more interested in the alternative that would use buses in place of trains.

"We live very close to the track," Joanna Woo said. "We're worried about the noise we're going to hear every time the train goes down the track."

The Woos, who live near the border of Redlands and Loma Linda, also expressed fear that automobile traffic could be adversely affected by a train and the gates that come down to block roads every time one goes by.

"It's bad enough already without the gates," Gordie Woo said.

Along with traffic and noise, the environmental impact report is held to determine what other aspects of the surrounding area will be affected when and if the Metrolink comes to town.

"The goal is to develop the best project possible," said Michael Johnson, representative of the Kleinfelder consultant group. "The goal is to reduce, eliminate or avoid impacts."

Comments like the ones the Woos gave could help determine which alternative is used.

The alternative analysis and environmental impact phase of the project is scheduled to be completed in February 2009, when it will proceed into the project development phase.

Gilbreath said part of the project would be funded through money from Measure I.

"There is target money set aside for this particular project," Gilbreath said.

MTA board will get long-range mobility plan in June

By ARNOLD ADLER, Staff Writer 24.APR.08

PARAMOUNT — Board members of the county Metropolitan Transportation Authority will consider its long-range mobility plan at its meeting June 26 following seven previews to the public by administrators during March and April.

Warning that average freeway speeds will drop to 14 miles per hour by 2030 because of population growth, MTA officials say they want to invest more than \$152 billion over the next 25 years to balance the traffic system.

That would be done by expanding the MTA's rail system another 32 miles and building 160 more miles of carpool lanes on freeways, they said.

Noting that the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are among the busiest in the world, official's project truck miles on area freeways will grow by 33 percent by 2030, with more than 38,000 trucks a day using the Long Beach (710) Freeway.

MTA officials call for "improved operational practices utilizing efficient and environmentally friendly means of transportation of goods."

The plans shows both funded and unfunded projects which include freeway construction along with bus and rail passenger upgrades proposed in the next 20 years, said officials who presented the plan in Paramount April 10.

Heather Hill, director of long-range planning for the Gateway Service Sector of the MTA, which covers many cities in Southeast Los Angeles County, and Deputy Director Ernest Morales were on hand to answer question, but there were few from the nine people in attendance.

Downey resident Harold Tseklenis supported the plan but urged the officials to consider the proposed Orange Line high-speed train backed by officials from area cities. That line would run from northern Los Angeles County through Union Station in Los Angeles to Orange County.

Hill said the MTA is familiar with the planned magnetic-powered train but said it was not part of the agency's plan because it will be privately funded.

In a brochure explaining the long-range plan, the MTA said transit providers currently operate more than 4,000 buses serving about 1.6 million people and two rail systems running on some 293 miles of track carrying more than 300,000 passengers a day.

The latter statistics include the four rail systems — the

Green, Blue, Purple and Gold lines — and Metrolink, a regional system that links Los Angeles with San Diego, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

The draft plan proposes the construction of six major freeway projects and the expansion of the light-rail system to include more than 80 stations covering almost 88 miles.

Next on the rail expansion list is the Gold Line Eastside Extension from Union Station to Atlantic and Pomona boulevards in East Los Angeles. That project is expected to be completed next year.

Unfunded Green Line extensions include eastward from the current station at Studebaker Road and Imperial Highway in Norwalk to the Metrolink station at Imperial and Bloomfield Avenue in Norwalk; as well as a Green Line extension directly into Los Angeles International Airport.

The draft plan would spend \$46 billion to close gaps in existing carpool lanes on freeways and improve congested freeway interchanges, including the Santa Ana (5) Freeway at Carmenita Road in Norwalk, to be open in 2014.

Unfunded area proposals include carpool and mixed flow lanes on the Santa Ana Freeway between the San Gabriel River (605) and Long Beach freeways and carpool lanes on the Santa Ana Freeway at the 605 and the 605 and Glenn Anderson (105) Freeway interchange in Norwalk.

Other money for the project will be contributed from federal sources and to get federal money, the city must follow certain procedures.

Thursday's scoping meeting was one of these steps.

DC Spends Millions on Trolley Route to Nowhere

Washington, DC spends millions to buy streetcars before constructing any tracks upon which they might run.



Three years ago, the city of Washington, DC spent \$10 million in taxpayer funds to purchase streetcars from the Czech manufacturer Skoda-Inkeon even though the District has no tracks upon which to run this trolley. Yesterday, the District Department of Transportation announced it would begin taking bids to construct trolley rails for a demonstration project in Anacostia. While the

project's future is not assured, the city hopes to spend \$65 million to push it forward, causing significant headaches for motorists.

Since it was first proposed, groups have lined up to oppose the trolley. Last month, the National Capital Planning Commission served up the most recent hurdle to the mayor's plan by citing a federal law in effect since 1889 that prohibits the use of overhead power lines in the part of the city carefully designed by French architect Pierre L'Enfant.

"If streetcar lines were constructed in denser, more urban areas, the infrastructure of the system, especially the poles with cantilevered arms extending across traffic lanes, would affect the historically open appearance and vistas of the streets within the L'Enfant City," a planning commission report said last year. "The commission has a federal interest in retaining and protecting the nationally recognized and significant open vistas of the rights-of-way of the L'Enfant Plan."

District transportation planners had been hoping to use trolley routes to take away space from automobiles in the downtown area to complement "bus only" lanes which increase congestion for drivers. For now, the effort has been scaled back to the Anacostia demonstration project, far from the historic city center. This trolley, if built, will run on city streets -- even though it could have run on existing CSX rail lines without interfering with motorists under an alternate proposal from the planning commission.

Around the time of the Civil War, the District introduced horse-drawn streetcars. By the turn of the century these were replaced with streetcars powered by underground electricity. The city finally dropped streetcars decades ago in favor of an underground metrorail system that does not interfere with pedestrian or motorist traffic.

The planning commission's report on the District's proposal is available in a 1.6mb PDF file at the source listed below.

Source:  Anacostia Streetcar Initial Line Segment (National Capital Planning Commission, 2/1/2007)

Trolley car drives back to Qianmen Street

www.chinaview.cn 2008-04-24 21:02:54

BEIJING, April 24 -- Two old-fashioned trolley cars drove down Beijing's Qianmen Street on Wednesday to add flavor to the renovated tourist attraction.

The trolley cars are painted according to the old style, and are expected to take passengers around the 800-meter-long street starting in May, when the

redevelopment job is completed, the Beijing News reports.



A photo taken on April 23, 2008 shows a trolley car parking on the Qianmen Street, which is now under a renovation project. (Xinhua Photo)

The trolley cars were nicknamed "dangdang cars" by Old Beijingers, as the driver would sound a bell at the head of the car to alert pedestrians. The cars first appeared in the city in 1914, and stopped operating during the 1960's.



A photo taken on April 23, 2008 shows the Qianmen Street, which is now under a renovation project. (Xinhua Photo)

Qianmen Street has a history of more than 600 years. After the renovation is done, the street will be restored to its architectural style of the 1920's and '30s.

Dozens of famous traditional brands such as Quan Ju De Roast Duck restaurant, Yue Sheng Zhai Muslim foods and Du Yi Chu snack bar, will have outlets on Qianmen Street. (Source: CRIENGLISH.com)