



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

## SEPTEMBER 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.org](http://www.osabus.org)". At [osabus.org](http://www.osabus.org) 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.

### • SEPTEMBER MEETING

The September meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on September 5, 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 "*Vintage Potpourri*", will be a continuation in the series of vintage bus slides taken by Chuck Tauscher over the years.

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.

## Life in the fast lane: CTA eyes Cleveland's buses

**Chicago set to test its own express lanes, which are cheaper than rail projects**

By Jon Hilkevitch | Chicago Tribune reporter

11:37 PM CDT, July 10, 2008

**CLEVELAND** - Don't dare dismiss the new \$200 million transit service starting up here as just another bus line.

Officials certainly aren't at the Chicago Transit Authority, which is studying Cleveland's experiment before launching its own "bus rapid transit" here in about a year.

Extra-long, hybrid diesel buses featuring stylized touches

that resemble sleek high-speed trains pull up to platforms at shiny steel-and-glass stations in the median of a major Cleveland thoroughfare.

The street has undergone a remake, including bus-only lanes and new traffic-signal technology that will give buses the green light for almost 10 miles from downtown to the city's east side.

The transit corridor, called the Health Line, is geared toward attracting professionals, many of them doctors and other health-care workers who commute to a medical district anchored by the renowned Cleveland Clinic. Medical companies are paying the city's transit authority \$12 million for the naming rights.

The challenge facing Cleveland—and ultimately Chicago—is how to set the new service apart from the stereotype of bus travel as slow, outdated and used mostly by society's have-nots.

"In Cleveland, suits don't ride buses. We are out to change that," Joseph Calabrese, chief executive officer and general manager of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transportation Authority, said last week as he rode on one of the buses with a Tribune reporter.

The bus-only lanes are still under construction along Cleveland's Euclid Avenue but are scheduled to be completed along a 9.4-mile stretch of the road by late October. The 4-mile section already in operation has drawn commuters from cars by providing a first-class travel experience that trims trip times and eliminates gas and parking expenses, officials said.

The buses pass cars in adjacent lanes where the speed limit is lower and traffic is thicker. The cost to ride the Health Line: \$1.75, the same as the regular transit fare.

"I can't wait for the full service to get here," said DeAnna Poindexter, 32, who works in management technology. "The car drivers are so inconsiderate talking on their cell phones while they block the buses."

At the CTA, whose buses average a snail-like 9 m.p.h., bus rapid transit has been earmarked as the No. 1 near-term priority. Armed with a \$153 million federal grant, the CTA plans to test bus-only lanes on four Chicago routes—portions of Chicago Avenue, Halsted Street, 79th Street and Jeffery Boulevard—starting mid-year 2009. The project would start with about 10 miles of bus-only lanes and eventually expand to more than 100 miles.



As in Cleveland, CTA riders will see upgraded vehicles, specialized stations and corporate sponsorships.

CTA buses will also be equipped with transponders so buses can breeze through intersections on green lights. And much like Cleveland, bus stops will be spaced farther apart—about a quarter-mile—to help cut travel times.

The key difference from Cleveland, though, will be the CTA bus-only lanes will operate only during the rush hours—one lane inbound in the morning and one lane outbound in the evening on each of the four routes. Off-peak, the lanes will be open to all traffic.

On most of Cleveland's Health Line corridor, one lane in each direction is dedicated to only buses 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

That makes more sense in Cleveland because its congestion isn't as bad as in Chicago, which ranks No. 2 in the nation for traffic gridlock. It also helps that two major streets that parallel Euclid Avenue can handle additional car traffic, officials said.

When a Cleveland rapid transit vehicle stops at a median station, a large door opens on its left side and passengers stream aboard without having to climb any stairs, making it wheelchair accessible.

When construction is completed, riders will pre-pay their fares at the stations to avoid delays, a strategy that the CTA plans as well.

The wider bus interior gives it an airy feel, and the seats are deluxe by transit standards.

Traffic signals at intersections will be automatically programmed to extend the green light so buses can travel at a consistent 35 m.p.h. in the bus-only congestion-free lanes. The 25 m.p.h. speed limit for cars in adjacent lanes is designed to encourage drivers to use alternate streets.

When the construction is completed, travel times are projected to decline by more than 25 percent over existing bus service, Cleveland officials said.

In Chicago, CTA officials are even more hopeful, projecting that travel times on the bus-only lanes could be cut in half when bus rapid transit reaches full speed by 2010.

In addition to its transportation benefits, the Health Line is extending an economic lifeline to neighborhoods on the route that have been in need of resuscitation for many years. The city has lost almost half of its population of 1 million-plus when it was a bustling manufacturing center during the first half of the 20th Century.

Young professionals and empty-nesters are slowly returning to the city center and to a blighted warehouse district, where restaurants, neighborhood bars, boutiques and other businesses are sprouting.

"This is the next wave. There is housing and entertainment and a new demand for downtown living and economic integration," said Michael Taylor, president of the National City Community Development Corp., a bank that is supporting investment along the Health Line corridor.

A plan had been on the books for years in Cleveland to build a downtown subway, but efforts languished due to the project's estimated \$1 billion cost.

In the Chicago area, big-ticket rail projects—ranging from the CTA's proposed Circle Line stretching around the city to Metra's suburb-to-suburb STAR Line—would cost billions of dollars to build. Currently, no funding has been identified.

If Chicago's upcoming experiment pays off, it's possible that bus rapid transit networks, costing as little as one-fifth the price of heavy rail projects, would make a more viable alternative.

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## CTA to experiment with seatless rail cars

### Brown Line likely spot for trial run

By Jon Hilkevitch and Deane Williams-Harris | Chicago Tribune reporters  
12:01 AM CDT, July 17, 2008

The cattle car is being reintroduced on CTA trains, even though the transit agency has worked hard in recent years to erase a reputation for treating riders like pork bellies being hauled on a freight train.

Under an experiment announced Wednesday, the Chicago Transit Authority plans to remove all the seats on some cars of rush-hour trains to jam in more riders who otherwise would be left behind on crowded rail platforms.

The strategy is a bit comparable to cramming 10 pounds of potatoes into a 5-pound sack.

Despite fiercely negative reactions among riders, the move is not aimed at punishing commuters, who are parking their cars due to record gas prices and riding trains and buses during the work week and on weekends. But rising transit ridership is causing an acute crunch on CTA trains.

The standing room-only cars will begin operating within a few months, probably starting on the Brown Line and later expanded to the Red and Blue Lines, CTA President Ron Huberman told the transit agency's board.



Up to about 90 riders can sit or stand in each car on most standard CTA trains. By yanking out seats and eliminating the aisle, an additional 25 to 50 passengers could be crammed into each car, officials estimated.

The seatless cars would be used at only peak travel hours, primarily on trains that operate on a portion of the route, then turn back to pick up more riders either headed into the Loop in the morning or home at night, Huberman said.

On an eight-car train, up to two of the cars would have no seats, he said.

Elderly and disabled passengers, pregnant women and those who prefer to sit could opt to ride in the cars with seats, he said.

"It's coming soon," said Huberman, indicating that design and engineering are well under way.

It will surely create challenges for Brown Line riders who would have to stand during an entire commute while positioning the ear buds of their iPods and not spilling the double caramel low-fat cappuccino (extra milk foam) on other passengers.

Riders aren't looking forward to the change.

"People enjoy the opportunity to get some work done and read while they're riding," Brown Line rider Trang Nguyen, 35, said while waiting for a train Wednesday evening at the Clark/Lake stop downtown. "You can't do that standing up."

Other riders who jockeyed for seats during the height of the rush period also voice opposition to the plan.

"I usually carry my laptop, and when I can't put it down, my back hurts," said Brown Line rider Abigail Szymonik, 29, at the State/Lake station.

But the reasons behind the change signal good news for the CTA: ridership is up, due in large part to soaring gasoline prices. But the extra fares from carrying more riders don't begin to cover the transit agency's operating costs, said CTA chairwoman Carole Brown.

In addition, the CTA cannot buy all the new rail cars it needs until the state comes through with new capital funding for transit, she said.

It puts riders in a real-life squeeze. The CTA will keep the "grab" bars on trains for riders to hang onto, assuming they can avoid the temptation to grab hold of each other as trains round sharp bends or screech to a stop. There are no plans to remove seats from buses, Huberman said.

The CTA began considering alternative seating several

years ago when it tested a train car with more center-facing seats.

About 400 rail cars being built for the CTA will have some aisle-facing seats. They are set for delivery in 2010.

How far the experiment goes will depend on customer response, said Huberman, whose solution is a tacit nod to Japan's strategy for handling commuter congestion.

In Tokyo, uniformed "subway pushers" cram people inside overcrowded trains. The workers, called *oshiya*, or pushers, are assigned to every downtown station. Even when the rail cars seem full, the *oshiya* aggressively stuff additional passengers through the doors.

Huberman assured CTA riders that he is not looking to Asia or the Third World for ideas. He said CTA customers won't be asked to ride on the roofs of trains, as riders frequently do in India.

Not yet, at least.

Stripping out all the seats from some train cars is not the CTA's preference. But with ridership increasing each month—due not only to gas prices but also a new requirement to provide free rides to senior citizens—the transit agency is unable to afford more service.

Ridership among seniors has jumped 25 percent since March when the free-ride program took effect, officials said.

The Brown Line is experiencing the most serious crunch, even though it has the third highest ridership among the CTA's eight rail lines. The Brown Line provides about 65,000 rides a day.

Last month, CTA rail ridership rose 3.4 percent compared with June 2007, while bus ridership gained 9.2 percent, officials said. While the numbers may not seem like such a dramatic change, many rush-hour trains have been packed for years, and there's simply no room for more passengers—barring the use of *oshiyas*—unless some seats are jettisoned.

Despite the CTA's good intentions, it will be tough convincing riders that rail cars without seats are a smart idea.

"I hope the CTA buys extra insurance for all the people who will be falling down," said Brown Line rider Michelle Kent.

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## Metra open to weekend service on SouthWest Service Line

By Nathaniel Zimmer, Staff Writer



Metra's executive director said Monday that the agency will work to bring Saturday train service to the SouthWest Service line as early as next year.

Metra previously had shown little sign of heeding calls for weekend trains from residents who live along the 41-mile line between Union Station in Chicago and Manhattan.

But Phil Pagano told area mayors and others Monday at a meeting organized by U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-3rd) that Metra would draw up a proposal by Oct. 1 for adding a few trains to test the waters and see if there is enough demand to support making Saturday service permanent.

"I was very happy with the meeting," Lipinski said afterward. "You never know that it's definitely going to happen, but it looks very good."

One of the keys to eliciting Metra's support was that supporters didn't demand too much, according to Lipinski.

"It's not jumping in and saying, 'We need to have 10 round trips a day or 15 trips a day,'" he said.

Metra leases the SouthWest Line tracks from Norfolk Southern Corp., and one of the obstacles to weekend service has been objections from freight carriers that make heavy use of the tracks on Saturdays and Sundays. But railroad representatives were present for the meeting, and they reportedly indicated they were willing to work with Metra.

Metra spokeswoman Judy Pardonnet said that if all goes as planned, the trains could be added as early as February of next year. But getting to that point will require coordinating with a number of rail companies whose lines cross the Norfolk Southern tracks.

"We can run more trains there in accordance with our lease agreement, but more than NS will be impacted if we increase trains there on the busiest freight day of the week, which is Saturday," she said.

Putting two or three round-trip trains on the line would require coordinating with the railroads. But it shouldn't require additional federal funds, Lipinski said.

RTA executive director Steve Schlickman said there was an area of the transportation agency's budget where money could be found to cover the cost of the extra trains, Lipinski said.

Among those in attendance at the meeting were Oak Lawn Trustee Jerry Hurckes, Lipinski's local chief of staff, and Oak Lawn village manager Larry Deetjen.

Deetjen started making noise about the need for weekend service shortly after arriving in Oak Lawn last year. He said Lipinski "did a great job" and that he was pleased Metra had committed to a trial run.

Lipinski said he planned to push for Sunday service as well, but he said it would be more difficult to find time then.

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## **Blagojevich pulls funds meant for mandate on seniors**

**By Marni Pyke | Daily Herald Staff Writer**

Another sucker punch from Springfield has transit agencies scratching their heads.

Facing a funding crisis in January, area riders were spared fare hikes and service cuts when the General Assembly approved a sales tax increase to keep the Chicago Transit Authority, Metra and Pace afloat.

But before signing the plan, Gov. Rod Blagojevich threw a curve ball at lawmakers by adding a proviso that senior citizens must ride free. Although considered an unfunded mandate, the new policy was swallowed by the three agencies as a necessary evil that allowed the funding reprieve to happen.

But Wednesday, Blagojevich pulled the plug on \$37 million that had been allocated to the Regional Transportation Authority to partially reimburse the agencies for offering reduced-fare rides to seniors, students and people with disabilities.

The cut was part of the governor's \$1.4 billion budget-balancing purge during a special session of the legislature.

Regional Transportation Authority officials seemed a little flummoxed by the move, saying they were still studying its repercussions.

Metra representatives took no joy in the news.

"Unfortunately, it's another hit for us," Metra spokeswoman Judy Pardonnet said.

And with rising fuel costs, "expenses are going up and ridership is going up," she said.

"It's several million that will have to come out of the operating budget we were just trying to build up. Now, we'll have to pay the difference."

Pace officials had a more optimistic approach given the mercurial nature of Springfield politics.

"We remain hopeful that when the legislature meets again next week that the budget impasse will be resolved," Pace spokesman Patrick Wilmot said.



Pace received about \$3 million of the \$37 million in the past.

The \$37 million hit comes at a time when transit agencies do have an influx of cash from the sales tax increase. At the same time, the cost of giving seniors free rides, which started in March, is not fully known although the CTA has estimated it could be \$20 million.

Further muddying the waters is the fact legislation allowing low-income disabled people to ride free on public transit is awaiting the governor's signature.

## Upgrades planned for train station

July 16, 2008

By MARK LAWTON [mlawton@pioneerlocal.com](mailto:mlawton@pioneerlocal.com)

Four years after a child was killed by a train at the River Grove Metra station, a plan to make the pedestrian area of the station safer is close to fruition.

Ten-year-old Michael DeLarco, formerly of Schaumburg, was killed Feb. 23, 2004, after taking the train with his mother and sister to visit his great grandmother.

According to police reports, an eastbound train had just left when Michael started crossing the tracks to greet his father, who waited on the other side. He did not see the westbound express train coming into the station that hit him.

In April 2004, his parents Michael and Linda DeLarco formed a foundation to increase train safety. The DeLarco Foundation has raised around \$40,000, mostly through an annual golf outing at the Schaumburg Golf Course (the next outing is scheduled for Aug. 6).

The DeLarco family also approached the Village of River Grove, asking if improvements could be made to the pedestrian area around the Metra station.

Those improvements include closing a gap in the chain link fence that runs along the south side of the tracks and eliminating the cross walk. That means people who want to get from one side of the tracks to the other will have to walk slightly east and cross at Thatcher Avenue.

The plan also calls for crossing gates across the street and sidewalk at Thatcher Avenue.

The village approached State Rep. Angelo "Skip" Saviano (R-77) who helped secure a grant for nearly \$300,000 from the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Intergovernmental agreements have been signed between River Grove, IDOT and Metra, said Thomas Potinkas, attorney for the DeLarco Foundation.

The equipment is ordered -- which Metra has not yet done -- the project is expected to take six weeks. Potinkas said he hopes it will take place before winter,

though River Grove Village Attorney Bart Smith thinks it's more likely to happen in spring or summer 2009.

The money raised by the DeLarco Foundation will either be used to offset cost overruns on the project or for a memorial at the station.

"We're happy we're at the point where we can see this will be completed," Potinkas said.

## With New Device, Metro-North Moves Toward Cashless Ticketing

By KEN BELSON

Published: July 10, 2008

Railroad cars are filled with passengers listening to iPods, typing on laptops and talking on cellphones. Buying a ticket onboard, though, is usually a pretty analog affair: Conductors punch holes in multicolored sheets called "duplexes," separate the back page from the front page and collect coins and bills from passengers.

Over the past few weeks, Metro-North Railroad has started arming its conductors with hand-held devices that print tickets and store fare data and that ultimately will accept credit cards.

The devices, which were unveiled on Wednesday at the railroad's headquarters on Madison Avenue, mark the demise of the dated duplex.

They will also reduce the amount of cash that conductors have to handle, as well as the laborious paperwork they have to fill out to account for it.

Metro-North spent 18 months and \$3.6 million developing the devices, which the railroad believes are the first of their kind in the United States. (They are found in Germany, Italy, Japan and other countries.)

The devices connect to Verizon's cellular network, so supervisors can send conductors text messages, and credit and debit cards can be authenticated.

The wireless devices communicate using Bluetooth technology connected to small printers that hang on conductors' belts and spit out yellow receipts about 3 inches by 2 inches.

The devices, like digital Swiss Army knives for conductors, are part of a long transition by the railroad to go cashless. The ticket vending machines at many stations accept credit and debit cards, and the railroad offers discounts for customers who order tickets by mail or online.

Peter A. Cannito, the president of Metro-North, said that conductors on trains handled about \$15 million in cash a year, down from \$60 million a few years ago.



The hand-held devices should cut that number further, he said, reducing accounting errors and the cost of handling cash.

"We try to run this as much as possible like a business because we have an obligation to taxpayers," Mr. Cannito said.

The railroad hopes to get approval from credit-card companies in the next few months to swipe and authenticate cards. Customers, however, will still be charged higher prices for buying tickets onboard. And Metro-North will have to pay credit-card companies like Visa a 1.8 percent service fee.

The company has been giving the devices to about 50 conductors a week. The devices also include the "Book of Rules" — an operations manual in a thick-ringed binder — so conductors do not have to carry them around.

Conductors will no longer risk being fined \$700 for losing a full book of 100 duplex tickets.

Issuing tickets using the devices takes about 11 seconds, said Len DeSimone, who oversaw the project at Metro-North.

Conductors will still use their punchers to handle seat checks.

Metro-North said that six other railroads, including New Jersey Transit, Amtrak and the Long Island Rail Road, have asked to see the devices in action.

Since Metro-North developed the devices, it is capable of licensing the technology to other railroads.

Penny Bassett-Hackett, a spokeswoman for New Jersey Transit, said, "We are looking at their model with interest to learn from their experience."

## **PART Receives Five Orion VII Transit Buses and Three Dodge Sprinter Shuttle Buses**

**Greensboro, N.C. (July 7, 2008)** — Daimler Buses North America delivered five Orion VII clean diesel transit buses and three Dodge Sprinter shuttle buses from its Greensboro, N.C. facility to the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) of North Carolina.

The eight vehicles from Daimler Buses will be used as part of PART's Express Bus Service, which offers transportation to and from Chapel Hill, Duke Medical, Greensboro, High Point, Mount Airy, Yadkinville, Wilkesboro, Pilot Mountain and Winston-Salem; with expansion service to Davidson and Randolph County going on line June 30, 2008.

"We have been very pleased with our fleet of original Orion VII transit buses and are excited about introducing the new Orion VII clean diesel option to our fleet," said Scott Rhine, operations manager for Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation. "Our passengers will enjoy the sleek new design, but our communities will appreciate the environment benefit these buses provide."

The Orion VII, which was re-introduced to the transit market in 2007, boasts a new, redefined European-inspired exterior design and an improved ergonomic driver's area. The sleeker style provides a more modern design, giving the Orion VII plenty of curb appeal.

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

The Dodge Sprinter is also a perfect fit for a transit agency's needs. The Sprinter is engineered for long life and durability and delivers exceptional performance with unsurpassed reliability and economy. Its extended fixed maintenance and oil change intervals keep operating costs low and regular maintenance easy. The vehicle's outward opening 38-inch wide door and interior height also provide passengers with quicker boarding and easier accessibility.

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

## **Ground broken for RTA transit center**

**Project will remove bus loading and unloading from Third and Main streets.**

By Lynn Hulsey

Staff Writer

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

**DAYTON** — Officials broke ground on Monday, June 23 on the new \$9.6 million Wright Stop Plaza Transit Center, which will remove all Greater Dayton RTA bus loading and unloading from Third and Main streets.

The transit center is located beside Wright Stop Plaza at that intersection. The former Admiral Benbow Hotel was demolished to make way for the project.

The project features a sheltered customer waiting area, bus lanes and 10 bus bays. Unused space that was supposed to become a day care center will become the



new indoor customer waiting area and bathrooms will also be installed. Covered outdoor areas will be heated.

The center will include Wi-Fi access, interactive kiosks and video displays of bus arrival-departure data.

Each day 1,150 buses will pass through the center.

Brumbaugh Construction of Arcanum won the general contract and work is expected to begin in July and be completed by April 2009.

Funding comes mostly from the federal and state governments, with the RTA capital fund covering \$1.1 million.

"Moving forward with the transit center project during challenging times makes good long-term sense for our community," said Mark Donaghy, executive director. "While some have suggested that the funds involved should be spent on additional bus service, they need to understand that the federal, state and even local matching funds from RTA are restricted for capital project purposes."

RTA will control the property, allowing security to remove people for causing problems or trespassing, something they have less ability to do on the public sidewalk.

Officials hope that moving buses off the street will reduce traffic and pedestrian congestion at the intersection. Donaghy hopes that will encourage tenants to locate in the WSP tower, where RTA is the only occupant.

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## 1st streetcar for city line arriving here

**Vehicle from Baltimore museum could be running on 2.6-mile loop in 3 years.**

By BERNARD HARRIS, Staff

What could be the first car of a future Lancaster streetcar line was coming to the county today.

A former Philadelphia streetcar was loaded onto a flatbed trailer to be trucked here.

The streetcar is one of three purchased from the Baltimore Streetcar Museum last week by the fledgling Lancaster Streetcar Co.

The local group hopes to establish a 2.6-mile streetcar loop between the Amtrak station at the northern edge of the city and Southern Market Center at South Queen and Vine streets and the Lancaster County Convention Center.

Two refurbished streetcars — three at peak times — would travel the loop every 10 minutes.

The former SEPTA car was headed for the Gerhart Machinery Co. near Brunnerville this morning. The car will be getting a "cosmetic restoration" — or a coat of paint — before streetcar supporters plan to put it on display in the city in coming months.

Jack Howell, president of the Lancaster Alliance city redevelopment organization and a Streetcar Company board member, said the repainted car will serve as a "three-dimensional brochure."

Many people have not ridden streetcars, he said. Displaying the car will provide an opportunity to discuss plans for the line, which he would like to have operating in three years.

Eventually, Lancaster Streetcar Co. plans to send the 1940s-era PCC streetcar to Warren, Warren County, where it can be restored. A complete rebuilding will likely cost between \$350,000 and \$400,000, Howell said. The PCC streetcars, named for the Electric Railway Presidents' Conference Committee, an industry leaders group that designed them in 1929, were never in service in Lancaster, said Howell. The sleek, art-deco-styled streetcars were a replacement to the spartan Birney streetcars that operated in Lancaster after 1915.

"Our goal is to have something that looks like a PCC but uses new electronics and technology," he said.

An example of that technology is regenerative braking, Howell said. In a process similar to a hybrid automobile, when an electric streetcar brakes, power is returned to the line that can be used by the other car on the line, he said.

The three cars, purchased for \$30,000, follow an uncompleted first purchase of a streetcar by the Lancaster group in an auction in December. That car was located on a disputed lot in Brooklyn, N.Y. That car was cut up for salvage after a New York judge gave the former owner an opportunity to remove the car, Howell said.

"An unfortunate situation of egos," Howell said of the dispute between the former owner of the streetcar and the property owner. "It's just sad to see one chopped up."

The three streetcars from the Baltimore museum are in better shape, having been kept under cover.

The first one has already been shipped to the restoration facility in Warren. It is being stored there while the money is raised for the work. The third car is now blocked in at the Baltimore yard. It will likely be freed and trucked to Warren by the end of the year.



Local organizers already have applied to federal and state governments for the \$14.1 million they believe will be needed for system construction. Although it has been passed over for funding once, Howell remains hopeful the project will be successful. The Streetcar Company would seek foundation grants and corporate sponsorship to operate the line.

Howell said getting the line operating may take longer than the two or three years he is shooting for.

"If it takes five years to do it right or two to do it wrong, we'll take five," he said.

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## **FRA Engineering to finish work on old Rochester subway bed**

Brian Sharp • Staff writer • July 16, 2008

Fourteen years after hiring FRA Engineering to prepare designs for the old Erie Canal-turned-subway bed, City Council on Tuesday night authorized the local firm to finish the job.

The \$1.6 million contract deals with the West Broad Street corridor and the controversial decision to fill the deteriorated portion between West Main and Brown streets. City Council unanimously approved legislation to move ahead — a move Dawn Noto said "devalues" the Susan B. Anthony Neighborhood, of which she is neighborhood association president, by burying part of its past.

If all goes as planned, design work will be completed in time to bid the \$13.4 million construction project in September. Work then would commence in earnest by spring and be completed in two years.

"I do not view the tunnel fill as a permanent solution," City Council member Carolee Conklin said, basing her vote on public safety and expense, with the tunnel costing taxpayers \$1 million annually in direct and escalating, deferred expenses. "What we shovel in ... can always be shoveled out."

The City Council vote authorized a supplemental agreement to FRA's contract, street width changes and appropriated state and federal dollars, which will cover most of the project cost.

In addition to designing a plan to strip out the steel substructure and fill the tunnel north of Main Street, FRA will finalize plans for turning that Broad Street section into a grand boulevard into the center city.

Additionally, the Broad and Main streets intersection will be narrowed and improved to make it more pedestrian friendly. The remainder of Broad Street to the river will

be milled and work done underground, shoring up the substructure.

"It's pretty rough riding out there right now. It's starting to fall apart on us," said Tom Hack, city project engineer. North of Main, one lane of Broad already is closed.

The subway operated from Dec. 1, 1927, until June 30, 1956, running between Lexington Avenue in the city and Monroe Avenue in Brighton. Only the one-mile stretch through downtown is underground, and the city has struggled with what to do about the cavernous space.

As a teenager in the 1940s, William Amann regularly walked from his Linden Street home to the South Goodman Street subway stop and caught a ride through town.

"We used to go down a long stairway ... sometimes it was so crowded people were standing," said the now-80-year-old Rev. Amann. "When (the train) made turns, it squealed terribly. If you were a kid, you'd have to plug your ears."

Amann has written City Council and Mayor Robert Duffy suggesting they create a tourism attraction in the old subway bed, running pack boats in a rewatered canal on one side, and old train rides through the subway on the other. That idea was endorsed by others at a recent community meeting to discuss options for the corridor.

The city expects to have a draft master plan by the end of November that focuses on the corridor between Main and the Genesee River. The plan might suggest light rail, a canal, or using the 165-year-old aqueduct over the river as a museum.

John Curran of the Bull's Head neighborhood said the city can follow its own scheduled detours, using Canal, Main and Plymouth streets to keep traffic off Broad north of Main and find a solution other than the fill. He envisions a West Side Historic District, pulling together the history-rich areas on that side of the river, but he told City Council members they are "basically cutting in half this vision."

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## **Metro gets \$16.1 million for gates**

By Sue Doyle, Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 07/15/2008 10:20:37 PM PDT

Steps to bolster security on Los Angeles mass transit gained a little muscle Tuesday when Metro received \$16.1 million to install 379 gates and surveillance cameras on subways and some light-rail lines.

Expected to save \$3.8 million lost each year on people deliberately not paying fares, the gates eventually will detect explosives and chemicals and can adapt to new security technologies.



"We know that the risks to our mass transit systems are real," said Matthew Bettenhausen, director of the state Office of Homeland Security, during a news conference Tuesday outside the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's downtown building. "The difficulty is that our mass transit systems are open."

The city has operated its mass transit on an honor system for 18 years. But by September 2009, a test gate will stand at an undetermined location.

If successful, Metro will install all remaining gates by 2010 at every station of the city's two subways - the Red and Purple lines - and sections of the Blue, Green and Gold light-rail lines.

No gates will be installed on Orange Line buses or at its stations along the 14-mile route from Woodland Hills to North Hollywood.

The MTA estimates that 5 percent of its light-rail riders don't bother paying.

"We're such a vulnerable system in so many ways," said Roger Snoble, Metro's CEO, speaking of terrorism. "The gates help us keep order."

Already, sensors are in place to detect some chemicals, said Dan Finkelstein, Metro transit police chief and a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department commander.

"There are many parts of the system that are unseen," said Finkelstein, who would not elaborate on what chemicals can be uncovered with the technology.

The gates should also save another \$3.8 million by reducing the number of fare inspectors hired to check passengers for tickets. About 50 inspectors now work for the agency. Metro spokesman Marc Littman said Tuesday he did not know how many could lose their jobs.

The money for the gates comes from Proposition 1B, a \$20 billion transportation bond state voters approved in 2006.

The money covers Metro's portion of the public-private agreement entered with Cubic Transportation Systems Inc. for gate installation. A 10-year, \$46 million lease was approved in February by Metro's board with the San Diego-based company for the gates.

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## Light rail gets start

**Starter line will go before vote in Nov.**

By: Kurt Kloeblen, Staff writer

Wednesday, July 16, 2008 4:18 AM CDT

The Kansas City Council promised citizens a new light rail vote - and it kept that promise.

The Council last week moved toward a Nov. 4 ballot election after months of debate about a starter route versus a more extensive regional system.

Second District Councilman Russ Johnson introduced the resolution calling for a three-eighth cent sales tax to fund a 12-mile starter line, which would run from the Country Club Plaza to Vivion Road and North Oak Trafficway in the Northland, with an eastern line to Prospect Avenue.

For many, the starter line is a first step toward the regional system.

"This is the first step in what will be a regional transit system," 4th District Councilwoman Jan Marcason said. "We have to look at the long-term goal. We're going to piggyback on the regional approach and we will be doing that during the next year."

Sixth District Councilwoman Cathy Jolly said that despite the lack of direct impact to the 6th District, the starter line will prove a valuable starting point.

"We have to start off with something," Jolly said. "As much as we would like, the starter plan can't include everyone. We have limited resources until the regional plan is done, so not everyone can open their door and have light rail pick them up."

A majority of the Council voted in favor of the resolution, but 6th District Councilman **John Sharp** is opposed to the starter route.

"The proposed starter line extends far north of the river out to where there are as many cows as people," Sharp said. "It doesn't provide any type of adequate service to the areas of Kansas City where people need public transit ... it's basically a tourist line."

Marcason said polls showed the 4th District, which could benefit from the starter line, favors light rail.

"The 4th District supports progressive amenities to the city. It's so diverse, but some of the areas it will really benefit are students," Marcason said. "A student who goes to UMKC can live downtown and get to UMKC on light rail. It's good for folks who work downtown and live in Brookside."

Sharp, who supports a regional system, said the piece-by-piece approach to light rail is the wrong way to go.

"The thing nobody is talking about is if we pass a tax for a Kansas City-only starter line, when we do get a regional plan - which I am confident we will in a year or two - Kansas City voters will pay an extra year or two for a regional system," Sharp said. "Why should we start paying before Grandview or Raytown or Independence? There's no reason we should have to pay for this years ahead of everyone else."



Marcason and Jolly said polling suggests citizens would vote yes.

"It was compelling to me, because people voted for the Clay Chastain plan," Jolly, who voted against overturning Chastain's plan, said. "We promised we would get something on the ballot. We have to trust that the voters want it."

Marcason said high gas prices could turn into more yes votes.

"The higher the gas prices stay, the more favorable the outcome," Marcason said. "People are frustrated and angry at how expensive it is to drive their car."

Sharp, however, said polling shows people favor regional light rail as opposed to a starter line.

"All polls show an extensive plan, that gets from somewhere to somewhere, engenders more support than a short plan that goes from nowhere to nowhere," Sharp said.

Contact Kurt Kloeblen at (913) 385-6087 or [kkloeblen@sunpublications.com](mailto:kkloeblen@sunpublications.com).

## Rail project presented in Stroudsburg

By David Pierce  
Pocono Record Writer  
July 16, 2008

**STROUDSBURG** — The proposed commuter rail line between Monroe County and New Jersey is close to qualifying — at least on paper — for half the money needed to build the \$551 million project, officials said Tuesday.

If the Federal Transit Administration rules that extending passenger train service 81 miles between Scranton and Port Morris, N.J., doesn't pose a significant environmental impact, New Jersey and Pennsylvania officials will be free to compete for 50 percent matching federal grants.

Such a determination could come by the end of this year, but it hardly means the entire \$275 million federal match will be immediately in hand. It means rail officials can begin applying for chunks of money as it's appropriated for general transportation needs.

"There's no timing," said Jack Kanarek, senior director of project development for New Jersey Transit. "Funding is the driver."

NJ Transit held a public meeting in Stroudsburg on Tuesday on its environmental assessment for the project, which would enable Poconos commuters to take a train to Hoboken, N.J., across the Hudson River from Manhattan. The environmental assessment will be

submitted to the Federal Transit Administration shortly after the comment period ends July 30.

The proposal calls for eight new train stations, including five in Monroe County. About 28 miles of new track will have to be laid along a right of way in western New Jersey. Extensive work also is required to rehabilitate a bridge spanning the Delaware River between the two states, at a cost of about \$30 million.

NJ Transit and the Pennsylvania Northeast Rail Authority do own all the rights of way. The Pennsylvania line already serves about a half-dozen freight customers, in addition to tourist excursions originating at Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton.

"It's been a joint effort essentially," Kanarek said. "We've been doing the work because we were designated the lead agency."

NJ Transit has taken steps to secure federal money for half of the \$36.6 million cost of restoring 7.3 miles of line between Andover and Port Morris, N.J., where the existing passenger rail line begins. The New Jersey Legislature recently approved \$2.94 million for that phase.

If the overall project receives the federal environmental green light, the initial phase could be completed within four years, said Kanarek. Then officials could begin working on all other aspects of the rail project, assuming funding is there, with passenger service from northeast Pennsylvania to New Jersey possible in six to eight years.

Before that can happen, New Jersey and Pennsylvania government officials will have to negotiate a formula for funding the 50 percent state match.

"The next big thing is to get an operational funding agreement," said Larry Malski, executive director of Pennsylvania Northeast Rail Authority.

Such discussions might begin with the two governors or their representatives. Pennsylvania also will have to designate an agency to handle Keystone State aspects of the project.

Three state representatives whose districts include parts of Monroe County, and officials representing the county's congressional delegation, voiced support Tuesday for commuter rail.

"This has an unbelievable beneficial environmental impact," said state Rep. Mike Carroll, D-118. "It will result in less people traveling by auto."

"This is an opportunity to make that commute easier," said state Rep. Mario Scavella, R-176. "I can honestly think now it's not that far away. It is going to happen." Scavella and state Rep. John Siptroth, D-189, both said commuter rail will benefit tourism, providing Poconos access to Manhattan residents who don't own cars.



Tom Williams, an aide to Congressman Paul Kanjorski, D-11, said there is only an up-side to commuter rail. "This is still the best deal out there on the face of the earth in terms of what it's going to do for Pennsylvania and New Jersey," Williams said.

Charlie Lyons, an aide to U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., said Casey and Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., both have worked hard to make the commuter line a reality. Mount Pocono Borough Councilman Bill Jabara said the council always supported the project. He said officials are particularly pleased that the proposed Pocono Mountain station — expected to generate 1,000 passengers per day — has been moved from congested Mount Pocono to property near Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport.

"We drove by an empty parcel five years ago," Jabara said of the station site, "and said, 'This would be a great stop.'"

East Stroudsburg Borough Manager Jim Phillips said a \$661,000 downtown streetscape improvement project will enhance the downtown area where the East Stroudsburg station would be placed. The work — through state grants awarded to the borough and the Eastburg Community Alliance — will provide new streetlights and crosswalks, and a "bumpout" of a Courtland Street sidewalk corner.

Steve Washington of the Eastburg Alliance, a downtown promotional group, took a wait-and-see approach to the rail project.

"I'm basically here to review the presentation because it has to be the right project," Washington said. "It has to benefit East Stroudsburg and not just move people through East Stroudsburg."

A stenographer was available to record comments from the public, but it was done privately and not as a presentation to the entire audience.

Written e-mail comments on the assessment will be accepted until July 30 and should be sent to [vtruncellito@njtransit.com](mailto:vtruncellito@njtransit.com).

## **Charter bus service to take over Greyhound route**

By BRYAN MEADOWS  
Tuesday, July 22, 2008

Caribou Coach Transportation Company Inc. plans to take over the Fort Frances-to-Thunder Bay bus route when Greyhound Canada drops the service next month. The Thunder Bay-based charter bus company has received approval from the Ontario Highway Transport Board to offer scheduled services to Highway 11 communities.

In March, Greyhound Canada announced that it planned to cut service along the corridor as of Aug. 20.

"This service has been a vital link between these communities, and our first priority is to make sure that the residents of Fort Frances, Atikokan, Thunder Bay and everywhere in-between can continue to rely on regular bus service after Aug. 20," Caribou Coach president Sandy Smith said in a news release.

Since Greyhound's announcement, provincial MPPs, municipal politicians and area residents have criticized the route termination, citing its impact on those who have come to rely on the bus service.

Fort Frances Mayor Roy Avis said Monday that he is pleased that a local bus company stepped up to fill the transportation void.

"It's got to be positive," Avis said.

Meanwhile, Highway 11 residents between Fort Frances and Rainy River have also voiced concerns about the status of bus service in their area. They'd like to see regular service restored, and possibly extended through to Winnipeg via Minnesota — a route that was previously operated by Greyhound/Grey Goose.

Replying to those concerns, Smith said the company has never been opposed to, or suggested that the company would not consider services through to Rainy River. But, he said, "there is more to it than simply extending service."

"We have to take into account other carriers who have permits to operate out of Fort Frances, and we also have to consider the economic viability of traveling through to Rainy River," he said.

"As for offering a route that extends through to Winnipeg, we again encounter the issue of existing carriers, as well as new and upcoming requirements for crossing into the U.S. by land starting in 2009.

"Are we prepared to look at these concerns though? Absolutely," Smith said.

Caribou Coach will unveil its Thunder Bay-Fort Frances schedule and passenger fares over the next few weeks.

## **Metrobuses Get Color Makeover to Attract Riders**

By Lena H. Sun  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Monday, July 21, 2008; 3:16 PM

Metro rolled out a bold new color scheme for Metrobus today, the first step in an overhaul of the region's largest bus system that is intended to attract more riders and improve service.

Instead of the current red-and-white striped exterior, the new design features a cherry tomato red and silver color scheme. The new 60-foot-long buses have a sleeker



design than the older, boxy buses and run on compressed natural gas. The buses cost nearly \$800,000 each, compared to \$650,000 for a comparable new bus that runs on diesel, officials said.



Metro has bought 22 of the long CNG buses in the new color scheme and will be putting them into service at the end of August, officials said. Metro decided to go with the CNG models despite the added expense, saying they're more environmentally friendly.

The buses have 61 seats and room for 42 standees, a few seats fewer than the older long buses.

Another 203 hybrid buses in the new color scheme will be arriving between now and next June to replace older buses and supplement Metro's current fleet of 1,510 buses.

No final decision has been made yet on which routes will get the new buses at the end of August, but Metrobus chief Milo Victoria said the busiest lines will receive priority. Among the lines being considered: the X line along Benning Road in Northeast Washington, the 70 line along Georgia Avenue, the 5A from downtown Washington to Dulles International Airport, and the S line along 16th Street in Northwest Washington.

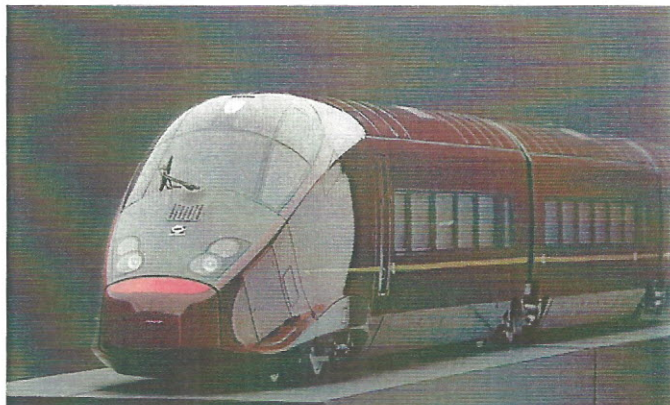
## Italian private operator NTV, the first to order the AGV, unveils the livery of trains it will be using from 2011

15 July 2008

Nuovo Trasporto Viaggiatori (NTV), the first private rail operator in Italy, has unveiled today in Rome the livery of the AGV very high speed train fleet it will be using on the Italian rail network from 2011.

In January 2008 NTV announced that it had chosen Alstom to supply and maintain 25 ultra-modern, very high speed AGV trains. This joint unveiling and launch of the new operator NTV took place in the presence of NTV's Italian founders, Luca Cordero di Montezemolo,

Diego Della Valle, Gianni Punzo and Giuseppe Sciarone, along with Patrick Kron, Chairman and CEO of Alstom, and Philippe Mellier, President of Alstom Transport.



The red livery, with a narrow golden stripe along the carriages, is a perfect match for the shape of the trains. Italian flags indicate the train operator's country of origin. The AGV is designed in a way that allows operators to fully customize their trains.

The contract signed with NTV in January 2008 covers the provision of 25 AGV trains for €650 million. It also includes maintenance of these trains for a 30-year period, although this is not included in the above amount. There is also an option for another 10 trains. Designed in La Rochelle, France, in Alstom Transport's centre of excellence dedicated to AGV trains, NTV's units will be assembled on this site (14) and in the Savigliano factory in Italy (11). A depot for train maintenance will be built in Nola, close to Naples.

The AGV prototype is currently undergoing initial trials on high speed test track at the Velim rail test centre in the Czech Republic. These tests will permit Alstom to fine-tune the train and to validate this new "very high speed" platform with a view to its final approval.

## Bombardier to Start Maintenance Operations on 45 New High Speed Trains in Spain

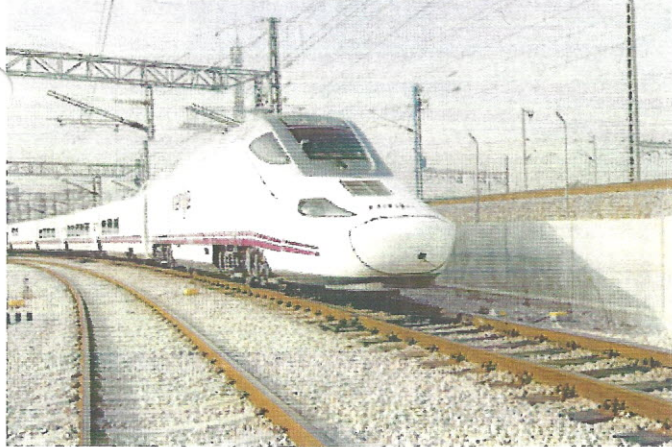
July 17, 2008 — Berlin  
Transportation

### Project Helps to Consolidate Bombardier's Leadership Position in High Speed Rail in Spain

Bombardier Transportation, in consortium with Talgo, has been awarded a 14-year contract with RENFE, the Spanish National Rail Operator for the maintenance of 45 AVE S-130 high speed trains. Maintenance activities will be carried out until 2022 at RENFE's depots in Sant Catalina and Fuencarral, both in Madrid. Bombardier Transportation's share in this contract is valued at



approximately 128 million euros (\$202 million US).



The AVE S-130 trains are designed to reach a maximum speed of 250 km/h and are equipped with top-technology systems such as a dual-voltage propulsion system, a highly advanced on-board signaling system and variable-gauge bogies. This enables RENFE to use these trains on Spain's new high speed lines, which are 1,435-millimeter gauge, 25kV power supply; as well as on the country's conventional network, which is 1,668-millimeter gauge, 3kV power supply. Also, the new trains and the power-heads will be able to operate in four different signaling environments: European Train Control System (ETCS), train control system LZB, *BOMBARDIER EBICAB 900* and the Spanish train protection system ASFA.

This maintenance contract will help to consolidate Bombardier's leadership position in the comprehensive high speed rail program being implemented in Spain, one of the most advanced in the world.

## A First in Spain: Optiguide for Castellon's Trolleybus Line

nächste Meldung

07.07.2008

**The Spanish city of Castellon, near Valencia, recently inaugurated three Civis new-generation trolleybuses fitted with Siemens' Optiguide system, to equip its first City Trolleybus Line. The 2km-long line is the first of its kind in Spain.**

Siemens' Optiguide optical guidance system allows the vehicle to very accurately follow the ideal route painted on the road and to dock as close to station platforms as possible.

This offers passengers comfortable, ground-level transfer between platform and vehicle, and meets everyone's accessibility needs, especially those of persons with reduced mobility. It will not only operate when the vehicle docks at stations, but also right along the line. In bends the line is exactly calculated to ensure

maximum comfort for passengers.



The line will initially serve five stations between Jaume I University and Ribalta Park, a fast-expanding district. The city plans to eventually extend this first line to a 20km-long route with dedicated lanes for the guided vehicles.

The vehicles selected for the line are 12m-long Civis new-generation trolleybuses manufactured by Irisbus Iveco. Accommodating 22 seats, including four wider seats for persons with reduced mobility, and a space for a wheelchair passenger, Castellon's Civis buses have full air-conditioning and Iveco medium-power diesel engines, which provide necessary power when their trolley poles are not connected to the overhead powerlines.

## Amtrak raises Northeast, Midwest fares, citing costs

By Chris Dolmetsch

Bloomberg News

Amtrak, the national passenger railroad, raised fares on 13 routes in the Northeast and Midwest by 5 percent, a spokeswoman said yesterday.

The fares were increased this month because of agreements with labor unions reached this year and the rising cost of fuel on routes served by diesel locomotives, spokeswoman Karina Romero said in an e-mail.

"Our fares are set by supply and demand, so the continued high demand and constrained capacity we are experiencing were also factors in the increase," Romero said. She couldn't immediately say when the railroad last raised ticket prices.

Amtrak carried a record 25.8 million passengers in fiscal year 2007 as crowded highways and surging gasoline prices pushed more Americans to use mass transit.

Also yesterday, Amtrak announced that 36 renovated cafe cars with new menus featuring brands popular in



the Northeast started running on trains between Boston and Richmond, Va.

The cars, which had been located in the front of trains near business-class seats, have been moved closer to the center to accommodate coach passengers, who make up more than 90 percent of riders, Romero said.

The cafe cars are the centerpiece of service improvements associated with Amtrak's new Northeast Regional service, which also features refurbished business-class seats and interiors and more cleaning of trains during travel. The Northeast Regional name replaces the Regional service label.

## **DIA rail route thrown a curve**

By Kevin Flynn, Rocky Mountain News (Contact)

Originally published 12:13 p.m., July 14, 2008  
Updated 12:13 a.m., July 15, 2008

FasTracks planners have come up with a new alignment for the train to Denver International Airport that will require RTD to buy more homes and businesses.

Originally, the East Corridor electric commuter rail line from Union Station to DIA was to run within the Union Pacific right of way along Smith Road. But earlier this year, talks fell through for RTD to buy a large assortment of Union Pacific properties for that and other FasTracks lines.

So planners for the \$1.14 billion airport train now recommend that the tracks for the most part hug the south edge of Union Pacific's property, partly on railroad land and partly on Denver streets and private property in the area of 40th Avenue and Smith Road.

Roughly between Downing and Clayton streets, the new path takes a significant dip to the south before rejoining the Union Pacific alignment.

And between York Street and Colorado Boulevard, the RTD tracks would cut between blocks and run along the backyards of businesses and homes.

RTD East Corridor project manager Mike Turner said the new alignment stays as close to the Union Pacific tracks as feasible and uses Denver street right of way to minimize the private property RTD must acquire. The lines still could change.

Turner said it is too early to know all of the properties RTD will need. But maps available at upcoming public meetings will show locations being examined.

The new alignment adheres closely to the original. RTD planners rejected two other alternatives, one north of the Union Pacific track that would have required two costly bridges, and another along an old Burlington Northern

track to 39th Avenue and north on Monroe Street. That also required a costly overpass on 40th Avenue.

The changes along with another modification at DIA add a minute and a half to the full trip, to 31.5 minutes. As a result the daily ridership projection drops from 37,500 to 36,800.

The new recommendations also include a site for the Colorado Boulevard station, to be west of Colorado Boulevard on the south side of the tracks.

At DIA, planners now recommend a slightly longer track and sharper curve, paralleling Pena Boulevard, rather than a diagonal cutoff, because of clearance for a nearby runway approach.

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## **Is it a tool or a toy?**

Planners envision lines across city; critics say it's an expensive fantasy

BY TODD MURPHY

The Portland Tribune, Jul 17, 2008

**Look at the maps — the city-drawn maps detailing the Portland possibilities for 15 or 20 years into the future — and things look a lot like 1904.**

On the maps are streetcar lines running throughout the city, extending like long narrow fingers to its corners. Lines run on some of the same streets where the City & Suburban Railway Co. and the Portland Railway Co. had lines 104 years ago.

Those old lines were before the automobile's dominance, of course. When people in the distant suburbia of Northeast 22nd Avenue and Halsey Street took a streetcar to work downtown.

The new lines on the Portland maps — which planners have been sharing and discussing with neighborhood residents throughout the city for the past several months — are suggesting a bit of the old world layered over the new.

And they suggest a transportation and development nirvana — or an incredibly wrongheaded boondoggle, depending on whom you talk to.

Streetcar advocates see a potential expansion as transformational, allowing people to more often avoid their pollution- and greenhouse-gas spewing cars, and enjoy reinvigorated neighborhoods.

Streetcar skeptics, or at least skeptics of this possible expansion, see the idea as delusional and incredibly expensive, with no one having any idea how it could be



paid for. They also believe it could be unhelpful to the neighborhoods, and injurious to the city's transportation system.

The lines on the maps represent nothing close to a done deal, of course.

City planners have progressed further in planning for one additional streetcar line. That line would connect to the existing one in Northwest Portland and loop it over the Willamette River and to the city's inner east side. The city is still awaiting approval on federal funding to help build that.

The much larger network of potential streetcar lines is part of a planning effort the city embarked on last year — to see what new corridors might work for streetcars throughout the city, and to see what Portlanders thought of the idea. Even with widespread support and identified funding, these lines might be 10 or 20 years away.

#### **The reaction so far?**

"It kind of runs the gamut," says Owen Ronchelli, chairman of a citizen group that is helping to guide the city's conversation with Portlanders about the possibilities. Ronchelli is also program director of the nonprofit Lloyd District Transportation Management Agency, which works to foster alternative transportation in the Lloyd District.

City planners, and many of the people on Ronchelli's committee, believe that an expanded network of electric-powered streetcars could be good for Portland neighborhoods, for transportation and for the environment, while helping people combat high gasoline prices.

Portland's current streetcar, the first modern streetcar in the nation, began operating in 2001 and now runs from the Northwest Portland past Portland State University and to the South Waterfront area along the Willamette south of downtown.

It "has largely been seen as a huge success," says Patrick Sweeney, who is a planner with the Portland Office of Transportation and is leading the city's planning efforts exploring the streetcar expansion. "It's been a real boon to the central city."

#### **Focus on corridors**

There's no reason that boon can't be expanded to other areas of Portland, Sweeney says. A few of the corridors the city and neighborhood residents are now talking

about push the streetcar further into Northwest Portland. But most of the potential corridors are throughout the east side. Among the more than dozen possible routes: on Sandy Boulevard all the way out past 82nd Avenue, along Hawthorne Boulevard to 50th Avenue, and north and south on 82nd and 122nd avenues.

"What these potential streetcar corridors can do is reinforce high quality neighborhoods throughout the city, and connect them to high-quality transit ... in a way that lowers greenhouse gas emissions and fosters the kind of mixed-use development that makes vibrant neighborhoods," Sweeney says.

There are plenty of people throughout Portland neighborhoods who like the idea.

"I think anything to get cars off the road is a good idea," says Ray Gordon, as he leaves the Ohana Hawaiian Cafe at Northeast 63rd Avenue and Sandy Boulevard with his wife and infant daughter, when asked about a possible Sandy streetcar line. "I think it would be a great idea."

But skeptics of the expansion idea question whether an expanded streetcar would be everything Sweeney forecasts. Some question whether the current streetcar was worth the price, given its ridership of about 10,000 riders per day weekday.

Others wonder whether advocacy of streetcars is more an attempt to foster development than improve transportation, and whether that's an appropriate, or worthwhile, focus.

John Fregonese, a local planner who says that focus can be worthwhile in some places, still repeats the half-joking question he hears often: whether the streetcar is "transit-oriented development" or "developer-oriented transit."

And still others question whether planners understand how inappropriate and inefficient a streetcar line would be on 122nd Avenue, for instance, where people need either their car or a bus with much more flexible routes to get around.

"People talk about these things. They don't come out here and live them," says Valerie Curry, president of the Argay Neighborhood Association in outer northeast Portland, which has Northeast 122nd as its western boundary.

#### **Some question tactics**



Even some current streetcar fans believe the city's approach of aggressively suggesting a wide network of streetcars is the potential beginning of a group of expensive mistakes.

"You have to start with what's the market for frequent transit, and then and only then, what's the best vehicle to apply to those particular (demands)," says David Bragdon, council president for Metro regional government. "Rather than starting with, 'Well, I've got a vehicle here, where should I put it?'"

Jim Howell, a former planner for TriMet, the regional public transportation agency, says: "I like streetcars and I think there's a place for streetcars. And I think the way the city's approaching it, frankly, is quite silly."

Bragdon, Howell and others suggest that the city and region should think about developing new forms of mass transit, or expanding current ones.

But there are other and better options for many of the corridors than streetcars, which they suggest operate very slowly on the west side of Portland and, critics say, would be unlikely to operate much faster on the east side.

Bragdon and Howell each say the city should explore installing a "trolley bus" line along some routes — an electrified bus powered by wires above it but that has more maneuverability than a streetcar running on tracks laid in the road. Fregonese suggests that bus rapid transit — an express bus service with larger and modified buses that often use their own exclusive right of way on a road and which is much cheaper than building rail lines — might work in parts of Portland.

"Portland spends a little too much time gazing at its own navel, and looking in the mirror, and not looking at innovative ideas from around the country," Fregonese says.

And Howell, Bragdon and others also suggest some routes simply need improved, more frequent, bus service. "I've been to some of these meetings (about the possible streetcar lines) and they don't even mention the bus service," says Howell. "It's as if it doesn't exist."

### **How to pay for it?**

And there is, of course, that question of money. To build the streetcars and to operate them.

As Laura Carter waits for the No. 12 bus at Northeast 64th Avenue and Sandy Boulevard on a weekday

afternoon, she's asked what she thinks about a possible new line up Sandy. "I'm thinking of the money, is what I'm thinking of," she says, shortly before boarding the No. 12 heading toward downtown. "What is it going to cost us?"

Ronchelli says he has suggested to the "district working groups" of citizens who are talking to various neighborhoods about the streetcar expansion idea to not yet talk about costs, or how the costs might be paid.

He says he's suggested that people simply analyze where a streetcar line might work especially well: "If money was no object, where would you put these things?" he says.

But while streetcar lines are cheaper than light rail to build, they still aren't cheap. The four-mile alignment of the current streetcar — eight miles of track — cost \$103 million to build.

That line was paid for through a combination of funding sources, including a 20-cent increase in hourly fees at the city's downtown parking garages, tax increment financing from the Portland Development Commission, and local improvement districts funded by property owners and developers along the route.

Those funds were available in large part because of the increased property value in developments along the streetcar in the Pearl District and South Waterfront. That significant rise in property values likely won't happen in the established neighborhoods throughout the city where planners are now looking at streetcar expansion.

While more money could be available through new federal funds, a significant local match would be required.

But Sweeney and Ronchelli say they believe a streetcar could reinvigorate many neighborhoods — in ways that increased bus service or trolley buses never would. Sweeney points on a map to the Gateway area on Portland's outer eastside, where a north-south streetcar could not only serve as an important transportation link but encourage significant development that could bolster the area.

"A streetcar here could be transformational," he says.

It also could be transformational in North Portland, says Chris Duffy, chairwoman of North Portland's Arbor Lodge neighborhood association. A line along Lombard Street, for instance, could significantly help businesses there, Duffy says.



"I think they're absolutely doing the right thing by pursuing a streetcar system," Duffy says. "I think it's a necessity in light of what's going on with gas prices and with the uncertainty in the continuing supply of fuel."

Plus, says Duffy: "It's been proven that they are good for neighborhoods. And people like them."

toddmurphy@portlandtribune.com

## SECOND ROUTE ON VTA AGENDA; MEETING SET TODAY ON DESIGNS

By Gary Richards  
Mercury News  
07/17/2008 01:33:47 AM PDT

The future of bus service in Santa Clara County will be unveiled today, when the public gets its first glimpse at plans for a new, rapid-service line along Alum Rock Avenue and Santa Clara Street in San Jose.

Instead of boxy city buses, chugging along in the far-right lane, stopping at every red light, these sleek roadsters will look more like Amtrak trains and will speed along special bus lanes built into the median on Alum Rock. They'll even allow the bus drivers to keep traffic lights green.

Future riders will get a chance to comment on the design during a 6 p.m. meeting today at the Mexican Heritage Plaza in San Jose. The buses will make fewer stops, run more frequently and cut the current 25-minute ride to 14 minutes on a corridor that has the highest transit ridership in the South Bay.

"The Santa Clara-Alum Rock line is the linchpin of everything we want to do with bus rapid transit," said Kevin Connolly, transit planning manager with the Valley Transportation Authority.

The \$128 million project, funded by taxes approved by voters eight years ago, could be completed in 2012. It will be the second line with fast, limited-stop service, following on the success of The Alameda-El Camino Real line, where ridership has shot up in the past three years.

### Additional lines

A third line along Stevens Creek Boulevard is also in the plans. Similar lines along Monterey Highway and between Cupertino and Sunnyvale are also possible.

The agency has undergone a major transformation in recent months. In January, it boosted service on its most popular 15 routes and cut back dozens of lesser-used lines. It runs more express buses, especially from the Fremont BART station to downtown San Jose, and uses smaller, shuttle-like buses in Los Gatos and Campbell.

The goal: Boost bus ridership by 7,000 a day by the end of the year.

Last month, ridership hit 112,784 a day - 10,434 higher than in June of last year.

What's different about the rapid-line buses from regular bus lines? A lot, from the looks of the buses to the stations and the roads they will travel.

Buses will likely be dark in color, a deep blue or maybe black. They'll stand out - which is the idea with a "VTA Rapid" or "V Line" logo on each bus, on this route and others.

Stations will resemble light-rail stops, and passengers will need to buy tickets ahead of time to avoid slowing down service by paying as they board.

Electronic signs at each station will alert passengers when the next bus is arriving. WiFi on board will be another incentive. Fares will probably be the same as on other transit routes.

### Rail too costly

At one time, the plan called for light rail to run along Alum Rock and Santa Clara streets. But that option would cost around \$262 million more, and it would tear up downtown streets, run less often, carry fewer riders and not be ready until 2021.

Plus, the annual maintenance cost of light rail is \$1 million per mile. Buses cost just a fraction of that.

The downside: A total of 106 parking spaces will be removed along the 4 1/2-mile corridor.

The hope is to attract people who don't now ride a bus.

"The look gives the impression that this is not a standard bus," Connolly said. "It will go fast, be convenient, and be comfortable. It looks like a train, and that is intentional."

Cities across the country are employing similar service, among them Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Portland, Denver and San Francisco. But the VTA needs to look no further than its own back yard to gauge the potential.

Line 22 runs along The Alameda and El Camino Real, and three years ago carried around 20,000 riders a day to rank as the most heavily used route in the county. But in 2005 the VTA introduced the 522 line, which shaved more than 15 minutes off a ride to the Peninsula - and added nearly 2,500 daily passengers.

## Houston's Greyhound station on the move?

07:24 AM CDT on Friday, July 18, 2008



**HOUSTON**—Just like the light rail comes and goes, buses at Houston's Greyhound station are constantly on the move.

But 11 News has learned that the bus station itself could be moving.

Metro officials confirm there are talks about relocating the Greyhound station from midtown to downtown on Main Street just north of the University of Houston downtown campus.

The talks reportedly center on making the station part of an intermodal transit hub.

"METRO has looked at the concept of an Intermodal Terminal on the north end of downtown that would incorporate a variety of transit modes including light rail, commuter rail and METRO bus. Private carriers could be an option but were not a priority," Metro spokeswoman Raequel Roberts said in a written statement. "These plans are continuing to be looked at, but have not progressed to the point beyond a drawing board concept."

Some midtown business owners would welcome the move.

"The bus station doesn't fit with this area anymore because it's land locked," said Vikki Trammel. She owns the Art Supply on Main Street.

Trammel's store is just a few blocks down from the bus station. She's noticed the bus station seems to have outgrown its space.

"The consumers or their customers are having to fend for themselves. It's hard for the buses to get in, it's hard for the buses to get out," she said.

Midtown is still in the midst of change.

More than 18,000 residents now live there now.

And new developers say the bus station poses a problem.

"We always get that question what's going to happen with the bus station. And I always say there are discussions about relocating the greyhound bus station," said Matt Thibodeaux. He's with Midtown Redevelopment Authority.

Greyhound officials have confirmed they are talking about moving, but say they stopped talking after initial design plans didn't meet their safety standards.

## **Greyhound to move to Citibus facility**

By Chris Van Wageningen | A-J BUSINESS EDITOR  
Saturday, July 19, 2008

Those traveling by Greyhound bus to cities across Texas and beyond will be catching their next departure with the help of Citibus.

Come Aug. 1, Greyhound Lines Inc. will be operating through the Citibus Transfer Plaza at 801 Broadway following a decision by the Dallas-based company to close its local terminal here.

"We'll be taking care of all of the ticket sales and handling all of the freight," said Citibus General Manager John Wilson.

Citibus stands to benefit from the arrangement. Wilson said the contract should generate \$200,000 in additional revenues, (minus operational expenses) for the Lubbock bus service, which plans to add a couple of employees.

"We'll be training all of our people. There's a certain way they do things. Freight has to be recorded and baggage needs to be tracked like an airline. We think it's a good deal for Citibus and Greyhound," he said.

Wilson said Greyhound will run 10 buses a day through the Hub City from 7:30 a.m. to 2 a.m. the following day. The agreement also calls for Citibus to operate the terminal on Sundays - a day it's normally closed.

Wilson said Greyhound told him the company intends to sell its terminal at 1313 13th St., but will continue to operate a nearby maintenance depot.

Greyhound made the decision to close the corporate office of TNM&O in March, consolidating those functions of two other bus operations under its larger corporate umbrella.

In Lubbock, the decision resulted in the elimination of 11 jobs.

## **Bombardier's streetcar bid derails**

Posted: July 17, 2008, 9:23 PM by Barry Hertz

By Allison Hanes, National Post

Bombardier, the presumed front-runner to supply new low-floor streetcars for Toronto, has failed to prove its vehicles can handle some of the tight turns on the city's narrow tracks, the Toronto Transit Commission announced late yesterday.

As a result, the Montreal-based company's proposal for the \$1.25-billion project has been rejected and the bid process to find a company to build an accessible fleet of new streetcars has collapsed.

The only other applicant, Britain-based TRAM Power, has also been disqualified for failing to clear an early hurdle.

The TTC said it will instead negotiate directly with interested companies to find one able to meet Toronto's



specifications. Despite the setback, Councillor Adam Giambrone (Davenport), chairman of the TTC, said he was confident the first of the 204 new fully accessible, low-floor streetcars will still be rolled out by 2012.

Officials from both Bombardier and the TTC said they were taken aback yesterday by the sudden turn of events.

"We were a bit surprised about the outcome — no question about that," said David Slack, the spokesman for Bombardier Transportation, the rail division of the Canadian company known for making planes and snowmobiles. "We have great experience building light-rail vehicles for Toronto and we're the No. 1 supplier of light-rail vehicles in the world."

But Mr. Giambrone said Bombardier must have known its bid wouldn't fly.

"Effectively, the car they bid would have derailed on Toronto streets and they would have known this," he said.

"It's not just that you submit a bunch of papers and then hope for the TTC evaluation. You're asked to do a simulation with your vehicle and your specs. And their simulation would have showed that they could not run.

"They knew all the steps that you had to pass through to pass the pass/fail in order to go forward, so you'll have to ask Bombardier why they submitted a bid that they must have known was non-compliant."

The deal-breaker, according to the TTC, was that Bombardier's trains risk derailing on the tight-radius turns required for some loops such as Neville Park, said Brad Ross, a commission spokesman.

Other criteria include: being able to make it up steep grades; clearance on corners; full accessibility; and energy-efficiency. "You fail on that alone, the rest of the entire bid unfortunately becomes non-compliant," Mr. Ross explained. "Those are the rules."

Bombardier and TRAM Power were the only two companies to enter proposals for the bidding process. Siemens, a German company, pulled out at the last minute without offering an explanation.

Alstom, a Montreal-based rail maker, declined to submit a bid, citing tight timelines.

Mr. Giambrone said the TTC will launch into talks with all those manufacturers to negotiate a contract that will meet Toronto's design requirements.

Mr. Slack said Bombardier is still interested. The company has a long relationship with Toronto and won a \$700-million contract in 2006 to build new subway cars.

An official from Alstom, speaking on condition of anonymity, said last night that the company would be

interested in providing streetcars to the TTC, but only if the conditions changed — especially the tight deadline for delivery. Alstom doesn't have any standard models that would fit the TTC's requirements, said the source, which would mean the company would have to design a model from scratch — and have it ready to roll in just four years.

## **TTC chair backs away from Bombardier comments**

**After streetcar contract screeches to a halt, sparks fly as the company denies TTC's accusations it knowingly delivered failing bid**

JEFF GRAY

With reports from Matthew Campbell and John Partridge

July 19, 2008

After a rebuke from Bombardier - the only major firm that bid on the TTC's massive streetcar contract - the transit agency's chairman yesterday backed away from his accusations that the Montreal-based giant knowingly submitted a vehicle it knew would derail on Toronto's tracks.

Adam Giambrone, the city councillor who chairs the Toronto Transit Commission, said comments he made Thursday that Bombardier had knowingly submitted a failing bid and had even written "fail" on its bid documents were "technically incorrect."

Mr. Giambrone and TTC officials said Bombardier did not in fact write "fail" on its bid documents. The word only appears in an internal summary prepared by TTC staff that was incorrectly cited by Mr. Giambrone in an interview with reporters.

However, Mr. Giambrone and TTC officials stood by their conclusion that computer simulations on the proposed streetcar show it simply could not handle Toronto's tight curves and steep hills.

"The word 'fail' did not appear in their document. The simulation, using their numbers, showed a failure of the car ... which seems logical for them to know," Mr. Giambrone said yesterday, adding that he did not mean to offend the company, which is the TTC's only subway-car supplier.

TTC spokesman Brad Ross said yesterday TTC engineers believe Bombardier was using "different parameters" than the ones supplied by the transit agency to model its design's performance on its tracks. For example, Bombardier assumed that drivers could take tight turns at a slower rate of speed than specified by the TTC.



Mr. Giambrone added in an e-mail late yesterday that Bombardier had apparently chosen to use European standards on wheel size, track condition and other specifications instead of the TTC's.

Earlier yesterday, David Slack, a Bombardier Transportation spokesman, angrily dismissed the accusations Mr. Giambrone made on Thursday.

"We take some exception to the comments that were in the media this morning that [Bombardier] knowingly submitted a non-compliant bid," Mr. Slack said in a telephone interview. "These suggestions are unwarranted and do nothing to further constructive interaction between the parties on this."

The trouble erupted when the TTC announced Thursday that both Bombardier's bid and one from a small British firm, the only two received, were deemed unacceptable.

The surprise news that Bombardier's bid for the massive \$1.25-billion contract to replace the city's 30-year-old current fleet had flunked the TTC's technical requirements had some critics claiming the transit agency had bungled the process.

Mr. Giambrone and TTC officials insist that the setback in their plans to replace the aging streetcar fleet will entail only a four- to six-week delay. They say the transit agency's engineers are convinced that 100-per-cent low-floor light-rail vehicle designs from several manufacturers, including Bombardier, can be made to run on the city's tracks with major modifications. New streetcars should still roll out in 2011, he said.

TTC officials say they will begin talks as early as next week with the three largest players in light-rail: Montreal-based Bombardier, Germany's Siemens and French-based Alstom.

Mr. Ross said Bombardier Transportation vice-president Mike Hardt spoke with TTC chief general manager Gary Webster yesterday, and technical meetings with the two organizations' engineers were being set up for as soon as possible in order to figure out what went wrong.

Siemens spokesman Dirk Miller said in an interview that his firm would be interested in talking to the TTC about possibly building its streetcars once again, after pulling out of the original process at the last minute, just before the company announced layoffs and restructuring worldwide.

Denis Chamberland, a lawyer and procurement expert at the firm Aird and Berlis LLP, warned the TTC against scrapping its "request for proposals" and entering into direct negotiation with the companies, saying the price on the new streetcars, now estimated at around \$5-million, could go up.

## Summer brings lift for the Sprinter, officials say

By PAUL SISSON - Staff writer | Friday, July 18, 2008 5:01 PM PDT

**NORTH COUNTY** ---- With schools out and families on vacation, the Sprinter light-rail line saw a June jump in ridership, tallying an average of 7,659 riders per day and boosting business near Oceanside beaches where the train lets out, officials said this week.

"It's sort of a beach pattern right now," said Tom Lichterman, operations director for the North County Transit District, at a recent meeting.

Eying a graph of Sprinter ridership, Lichterman pointed to a spike in the total number of passengers at about 4 p.m. He said that the surge of traffic on the line is probably from beach travelers, who trickle out to the coast in the morning, then return to eastern cities in the late afternoon.

Regional planning officials have said they expect the Sprinter to carry nearly 12,000 riders daily by the end of its first year of operation.

The latest Sprinter counts are about 600 riders higher than the last count, taken in May, Lichterman said.

The news did not surprise Sharon Olloqui, owner of the Ensemble clothing store in the swank new Oceanside Terraces building on Cleveland Street in downtown Oceanside.

The building sits right next to the Oceanside Transit Center, and Olloqui said she has seen increasing numbers of tourists and day trippers walking down the sidewalk in front of her shop, headed to and from the waterfront.

The shopkeeper said that when she rings up sales she asks the customers where they are from so she can track that information. She said she is seeing shoppers from inland cities, in addition to the usual vacationers visiting from other states.

"The trains ... really help, both the Sprinter and the Coaster," she said. "We're seeing them from Escondido, San Marcos ---- they're coming from inland and they just want to cool off."

The \$480 million Sprinter light-rail line opened in March after years of controversy, cost increases and construction setbacks. The 22-mile route stretches from Escondido to Oceanside, with 15 stops along the way.

Critics alleged all along that the train would be a boondoggle and that North County residents would shun the rail service. But in its first few months of operation, transit officials have said they're pleased with number of folks who are giving the train a try.



On Friday morning, the Spurgeon family from San Marcos made its first outing on the Sprinter, heading for the beach in Oceanside, said mom Christy.

"In the summer, we go to the beach every Friday, and we thought we would come out on the Sprinter this time," she said, as the family headed away from the train's platform toward the shore.

Spurgeon said the family usually picks a beach in Carlsbad, or Encinitas for the Friday trip. She added that it was the simple fact that the Sprinter's westernmost terminus is on Cleveland Street in Oceanside that brought the family to town.

"We would come back again, but not every Friday," Spurgeon said.

There are signs that Oceanside's entire beachfront is getting a Sprinter bump this summer.

Kim Heim, director of Mainstreet Oceanside, said Friday that many business owners have reported increased Sprinter-related sales. He said concession vendors at Tyson Street and The Strand, the closest beach access to the Sprinter platform, are finding they can almost set their watches to Sprinter arrivals.

They say over and over that they can tell exactly when each Sprinter arrives," Heim said.

Back over at Oceanside Terraces, Kirk Harrison, co-owner of the polished new Harney Sushi restaurant, said he agrees that foot traffic on the sidewalk that passes his front door is steady and increasing. But he said the restaurant has not yet seen an influx of new customers from nearby trains or buses.

"I don't survey our customers or anything, so it's hard to say, but I get the feeling that most of our customers drive," Harrison said.

Harrison himself, however, said he rides the rail almost daily, hopping on a Coaster train to reach Harney's sister restaurant in Old Town San Diego.

"It's definitely great being this close to the train," he said. "I haven't been in my car in a week."

The Sprinter does what it can to court beach-bound riders, allowing Boogie boards, beach chairs, small coolers and surfboards up to 6 feet long.

The train runs every half-hour from 4 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays and every hour on weekends. Sprinter day passes are \$4 per person.

Contact staff writer Paul Sisson at (760) 901-4087 or [psisson@nctimes.com](mailto:psisson@nctimes.com).

## **FrontRunner: Shine wearing thin on leisurely Saturday rides**

**Shoppers, train-curious still hop aboard, but the numbers wane**

By Brandon Loomis  
The Salt Lake Tribune

Article Last Updated: 07/20/2008 01:16:38 AM MDT

The "commuter" in commuter rail is all business, but come the weekend, Utah's new train is a surprisingly popular pleasure trip.

FrontRunner trains started rolling between Ogden and Salt Lake City in April and, until last month, Saturday was by far the biggest day for a ride. That weekend surge has waned with Utahns' curiosity about the fast trains, but Saturday riders still number just several hundred fewer than their workday counterparts.

Saturday trains carried an average of 7,113 people in June, compared with 7,809 on weekdays. FrontRunner does not run on Sundays.

The train has inspired a wave of intrastate tourism, and as many day-trippers are heading north to Ogden as are riding south to the bigger city, said Paul O'Brien, Utah Transit Authority rail general manager.

"People get off the train [in Ogden] and ask, 'Where's a good place to eat lunch around here?'" O'Brien said.

Richard Arbogast and his grade-school daughter Olivia were heading the other direction Saturday in search of food in Utah's capital. He said that while his work sometimes takes him from Ogden to Salt Lake City on weekdays, the train is more attractive on Saturdays, when he has leisure time. Work usually means trying to hit meetings on a tight schedule.

"It's relaxing," Arbogast said of the weekend train, though for Olivia the goal clearly was the excitement of train travel. She circled her father on the Ogden platform, pestering him to board 15 minutes before the train left.

Besides the weekend train's pace, Arbogast said, it's gas savings that draw him. His wife was working in Salt Lake City on Saturday, and he didn't want them to have to drive two cars home after dining together. At Salt Lake Central platform, people pushing strollers swarmed between FrontRunner and its TRAX light-rail connection before the 2:25 northbound train left. On board, the cars were about a third full (and near capacity later) as were park-and-ride lots along the route.

Part of the allure is UTA's family pass: A round trip on trains and buses for \$14.50 that's good on weekends and after 5 p.m. on weekdays.



"It's like three generations," O'Brien said. "It's not just kids, it's grandparents as well that are out there going for a ride."

Though Ogden Union Station officials couldn't provide numbers this week, attendant Diana Call said there's an upswing in Saturday ticket sales at the station's Utah State Railroad Museum, Browning-Kimball Classic Car Museum and John M. Browning Firearms Museum.

And, she said, "A lot more people are on the streets walking around."

UTA has seen this kind of weekend curiosity before, when there was a rush of Saturday riders after TRAX opened from Sandy to downtown Salt Lake City in late 1999. A year later the agency added Sunday TRAX service - something O'Brien said isn't likely anytime soon for FrontRunner, especially with the slump in sales-tax receipts that subsidizes service.

Eventually, he expects the wave of weekend FrontRunner riders will decline further, though not by a lot. UTA has better midday, night and weekend service than a lot of train systems around the country, and also sees a greater share of off-peak riders than most, he said. bloomis@sltrib.com

## **New bus line links Wausau to cities**

BY MARK MULTER • WAUSAU DAILY HERALD • JULY 17, 2008

Starting today, the Wausau area will be linked to Milwaukee, Minneapolis and points in between by a new route established by interstate bus company Jefferson Lines.

The new route will operate 365 days a year, with stops along the way at cities such as Hudson, Eau Claire, Shawano, Green Bay and Sheboygan. It's a service residents here have continued to request since Greyhound eliminated 43 stops in Wisconsin in 2004, said Bonnie Buchanan, vice president of Minneapolis-based Jefferson Lines.

"At that time, we had many, many calls from people asking us to pick it up, but we had all the new service we could handle," Buchanan said. "When an area doesn't have bus service, pretty soon the demand just goes away. People stop calling."

Residents in the Wausau area, however, have continued to call for bus service, Buchanan said, and rising gasoline prices have fueled demand.

"We know that to start with, it will be slow because there hasn't been service in such a long time, but we see potential there," she said. "Our ridership has been up because of fuel (prices)."

Jefferson Lines will be represented locally by Lamers Bus Lines, which offers its own daily bus route to

Milwaukee through Stevens Point, Appleton and Oshkosh. Passengers will be able to purchase tickets and board the bus at Lamers' depot at 2415 Trailwood Lane in Rothschild, and there will be a second local stop at the Wausau Transit Center, 555 Jefferson St., in downtown Wausau.

Other stops on the route include St. Paul, Menomonie, Chippewa Falls, Stanley, Abbotsford, Wittenberg and Manitowoc. Schedule and fare information is available at [jeffersonlines.com](http://jeffersonlines.com) or by calling 800-451-5333.

## **Light rail on fast track**

### **Newfound political will may finally make regional transit authority a reality**

Steven Elbow — 7/23/2008 8:17 am Capital Times|Madison WI

After years of roadblocks, the stars are aligning for a commuter rail system in Dane County.

On Aug. 7, a state legislative study committee will begin work on drafting a bill to allow regional transit authorities -- local taxing districts that will manage and fund transit systems.

"The state legislation is really going to be the thing that sets the framework for what we can do here locally," said David Trowbridge, project manager for Transport 2020, an ambitious plan that could change the way Dane County residents get around.

State Senate President Fred Risser, D-Madison, said he expects the committee to come up with a proposal that can be introduced to the Legislature in the spring -- a fast track for any legislation, but even more so on an issue lawmakers in years past have been reluctant to embrace.

The centerpiece of the Transit 2020 plan is a light rail corridor stretching from Middleton to Sun Prairie. The rail line would connect a growing number of workers, students, sports fans and shoppers to state office buildings, cultural events, the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, hospitals and businesses.

But it comes at a cost: \$250 million for construction of the first phase of the system and \$10 million in annual operating expenses.

On June 18, city and county officials, along with the state Department of Transportation, applied for funding from the federal government to help pay for the project, the first phase of which will cover a 16-mile stretch from the U.S. 12/14 interchange in Middleton, through the isthmus, then to Reiner Road on Madison's far east side, just two miles short of Sun Prairie.

U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin and Sens. Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold sent a letter last week to U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters urging quick



approval of the plan. Noting that Dane County, with more than 468,000 residents and a growth rate of 60,000 per decade, is the fastest-growing metropolitan area in the state, the lawmakers wrote that the region is "ripe for improved commute time, cleaner air, convenience and gas savings." Approval of the application would mean the federal government would pick up as much as 60 percent of the cost of building the system. The rest would be covered by a combination of state and local dollars.

One big stumbling block was cleared more than a year ago when Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz mended fences with Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk by dropping his plan for a trolley car system that would connect the isthmus with UW-Madison, hospitals, malls and office buildings. Falk was concerned that the cost of the trolleys would undercut funding for the commuter rail. Now, said Falk, "We have a local leaders' consensus here in our area" and "we are eager to get legislation passed for the governor to sign."

County officials have proposed a half-cent sales tax increase that would generate more than \$40 million a year to help pay for the construction and operation of the system. The Dane County Board earlier this year also approved holding a referendum within a year of passing an RTA law that would gauge whether the public is willing to pay the extra half-cent tax.

The first phase of the project falls short of Transport 2020's ultimate goal to run the rail line to a station in downtown Sun Prairie, Trowbridge said. The project uses existing rail lines, but the last two miles from Reiner Road to Sun Prairie are dilapidated, and a land bridge would be needed to span swampland, at an estimated cost of \$30 million to \$40 million.

Still Trowbridge said serving downtown areas is a central long-term goal of the plan. But the cost of extending the system to downtown Sun Prairie could have jeopardized the federal application.

"We thought it would almost be the tipping point of our project being deemed cost-effective at this point," he said. "But we definitely see that extension to Sun Prairie in the very near term, and it's something we really want to do."

**COMING** up with a regional transit authority bill that everyone can accept promises to be a difficult process, one that the Legislature in years past has dodged even as surrounding states -- Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Michigan -- rely more and more on RTAs to keep transit systems moving in an era of skyrocketing gas prices.

The pressure to finally come up with legislation is not coming from Dane County, or even Milwaukee, where the bus system is in a freefall revenue deficits and service cuts. It's coming from the Fox Valley.

Transit systems serving both the Green Bay and Appleton areas will lose millions in federal dollars when 2010 census figures confirm they each have surpassed the 200,000 population mark. That's the point where the federal government considers a metropolitan area able to pick up more of its share of transit funding.

And because the state pools and then divvies up federal money among local transit systems, the drop in federal funds would affect all but the largest systems in the state -- at a time when transit budgets are stretched to the limit due to gas prices.

While in the past Republicans have balked at implementing another tax, the issue now transcends party politics.

"You've got just a tremendous need, and it turned it into a bipartisan need in a hurry," said Steve Hiniker, executive director of the environmental land use group 1000 Friends of Wisconsin and a member of the Transport 2020 board.

State Rep. Al Ott, R-Forest Junction, who represents the Appleton area, got involved last year, holding a series of informal meetings that drew representatives from several communities interested in forming regional transit authorities, including Dane County, La Crosse, Racine, Beloit and Milwaukee. Special interests, including real estate and road building lobbies, also sent representatives, and the group tried to come to a consensus on how the transit legislation should work.

The efforts produced a draft proposal last legislative session, but the measure died before it was even introduced as a bill.

"Where we had a unanimity from all the communities in the state at one point saying they want this RTA legislation, it just blew up," Hiniker said.

Risser, who as co-chairman of the Joint Legislative Council authorized the legislative study committee, said pressure from lawmakers across the state is growing.

"There were a number of legislators who asked that this committee be set up," he said.

The committee is designed to overcome the differences that have tanked negotiations in the past.

Ott, the chair of the committee, and state Sen. Judy Robson, D-Beloit, the vice chair, were not available for comment. But Robson aide Helen Marks Dicks said the study committee process is designed to resolve differences and get legislation passed.

"You come out of these study committees having worked through those problems and you end up with a recommendation that's supportable by everybody," she said.



But Hiniker said even if the state passes regional transit legislation, local politics could still throw a monkey wrench into the works because localities have the final say on the proposal.

For instance, while an Edgewood College survey of 262 likely Dane County voters last year showed that 65 percent of the respondents supported a regional transit authority, Waunakee, Sun Prairie, Cross Plains and Stoughton have voted to oppose one.

"I'm fairly certain there will be RTA legislation passed by the Legislature and passed into law," Hiniker said. "But after that happens it still has to come back to any community that would be part of an RTA to approve it."

## **Siemens to concentrate production on three sites**

SIEMENS: Around 2 500 jobs will be lost worldwide in a reorganization of the Mobility division announced by Siemens on July 23. Rail Vehicle manufacturing will be concentrated at three centres of competence in Germany and Austria, and the company will dispose of the former CKD Dopravní plant at Praha-Zlín.

Aluminium vehicles are to be produced at Krefeld-Uerdingen, where 220 jobs will be lost when the Combino rectification programme comes to an end. Steel vehicles will be manufactured in Wien, and locomotives in München.

Siemens Mobility will give up its Praha production facility by the end of the 2009 financial year. This employs around 950 staff, and Mobility division CEO Hans-Jörg Grundmann said 'we have a number of very well trained specialists and can also imagine selling the factory to a reputable company.'

Siemens blamed its excess of capacity on the growing proportion of customers in markets such as China, who increasingly require the involvement of local partners. Production locations close to the customer, including the light rail plant in Sacramento, are to be retained, and more production work will be outsourced to subcontractors, as is done in the automotive industry.

'In the necessary reorganization process, excess capacity in our factories will be eliminated. This will ensure the long-term competitiveness of the Mobility division', said Grundmann

## **Oakland Airport to buy 26 natural gas buses as shuttles**

San Francisco Business Times - by Steven E.F. Brown

Oakland International Airport will buy 26 buses that run on compressed natural gas, or CNG, as shuttles connecting terminals with BART and rental car lots.

CNG vehicles are considered cleaner than diesel or gasoline fueled vehicles. The buses connecting BART to the airport have each done about 600,000 miles of work in their 10 years of driving. Rental car buses are 27 years old. All the buses must be replaced by the end of 2009 by state clean air laws.

Six of the new buses will be used to ferry people to and from the Coliseum BART station, the closest BART stop to the airport. (Ridership has been growing on the five-year-old BART connection to San Francisco International Airport, where trains roll right into the terminal.)

The other 20 buses will carry people back and forth to the rental car lots beyond the airport, most of them along Doolittle Drive to the northeast.

The airport thinks it may save up to \$400,000 a year by switching from diesel buses to CNG. It didn't say, however, what the upfront cost of the new, cleaner vehicles will be, but the airport has already passed some of that cost onto its customers. People who ride the BART to Oakland Airport shuttles have been paying a dollar more per trip since March 2007 in order to pay for the new buses. Also, \$10 has been added to every rental car contract.

A one-way trip from downtown Oakland to the Oakland Airport costs \$1.50 BART fare plus \$3 for the shuttle, for a total cost of \$4.50. From downtown Oakland to SFO costs \$5.65, but the trip is all on BART, with no schlepping of suitcases down stairs or escalators and no wait on busy San Leandro Street in a gritty industrial neighborhood for the airport shuttle to arrive.

From downtown San Francisco BART costs \$5.35 to SFO and the trip to Oakland Airport costs \$6.55, including the shuttle fare.

New CNG buses are set to start running in 2009, although the airport didn't give a more precise date during the year.