



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

## **JANUARY 2009**

**\$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://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.

## **JANUARY MEETING**

**The January meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on January 2, 2009, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2751 W. Winona Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The meeting will start at 7:30pm.

Our program for the evening will be a slide presentation by Myron Lane, a long-time resident of Chicago and photographer of its local transit scene.

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.

## **Notice to members**

With the increase in printing and postage costs, the Board of the Omnibus Society of America has been forced to take the following actions concerning The Green Pennant Special.

Beginning with the March 2009 issue of The Green Pennant Special it will be produced by monthly and all of the photos will be printed in black and white.

If any member who has email wishes to receive The Green Pennant Special electronically (two attachments) please let any director know at the January or February meeting and OSA will send it to your email address.

The electronic edition will contain color pictures, not black and white.

OSA is sorry for this change to The Green Pennant Special.

## **While others act on transit, city and state officials talk and the CTA waits**

By Jon Hilkevitch Tribune transportation reporter

Jon Hilkevitch | Getting Around

**November 10, 2008**

Chicago officials talk—and so far it's mostly a lot of talk—about the need to shape up the CTA in time for the city to possibly host the 2016 Olympics.

On the state level, elected officials who repeatedly shirked their responsibility to replace crumbling transportation infrastructure in Illinois are now talking, too—perhaps over-optimistically—that the Barack Obama presidency will do much of the heavy lifting.

But elsewhere, most notably on the West Coast, action in the voting booth once again has spoken louder than hollow words.

Los Angeles County residents frustrated by gridlock in the most-congested U.S. city voted Tuesday for a half-cent sales-tax increase to finance new bus and rail lines and other transportation improvements. The package is projected to cost \$40 billion over 30 years.

Statewide, meanwhile, Californians approved construction of a 220 m.p.h. electric passenger train system linking San Francisco to Los Angeles and other major cities on the route. The business plan for the 800-mile network of trains forecasts that more than \$1 billion in surplus revenue will be generated annually by 2030 and a triple return on investment will be realized over 40 years.

The project, backed by \$10 billion in bonds and still needing federal matching grants and private-sector participation, would be the biggest move yet toward introducing true high-speed rail service in America, breaking from the traditional focus of expanding highways.

In addition, the California rail project could serve as a model for a proposed *Midwest* network of faster trains serving Chicago and reaching out to cities in nine states.



Once again, no transportation referendum proposals were on the ballot last week in northeastern Illinois, which ranks second nationally behind Los Angeles for congestion. Limited provisions exist in Illinois for placing questions on the ballot.

In addition, there are no signs of breaking the political gridlock in Springfield that has blocked a new state capital spending plan to rebuild aging infrastructure.

Nationwide there are more than 550 transit projects valued at \$8 billion that are "ready to go" as soon as funding is made available, according to the *American Public Transportation Association*.

The list includes projects in the Chicago area, such as track improvements on CTA rail lines and the purchase of more buses to replacing aging vehicles that have logged more than a half-million miles.

"The track renewal projects are new projects that build on the projects already under way or completed," said CTA spokeswoman Noelle Gaffney, referring to sections of the Dearborn subway on the Blue Line and the Dan Ryan branch of the Red Line.

The list doesn't even begin to address longer-term projects including the CTA Circle Line; proposed extensions of the Red, Orange and Yellow Lines; or Metra's proposed suburb-to-suburb STAR Line.

Transit officials are hoping to receive start-up money for those projects in the next federal transportation bill that Congress is scheduled to pass next year. Until federal or state action occurs, the Illinois projects will remain in limbo.

Meanwhile, in the Seattle area last week, voters said "yes" to expanding commuter rail and express bus service and creating a 55-mile light rail system, costing \$17.8 billion over 20 years.

Voters in Honolulu, where the road to paradise is mired in traffic jams, approved a rail system.

Residents in Youngstown, Ohio, passed a funding increase to save the Western Reserve Transit Authority from shutting down.

In total, voters in 16 states approved 23 measures out of 32 state and local public transit-related ballot initiatives, authorizing expenditures of about \$75 billion, according to the American Public Transportation Association, which represents the interests of public transit agencies.

"It is significant to note that in a time of economic uncertainty, more than 70 percent of transit-related ballot measures passed," said William Millar, association president.

Chicago and Illinois officials who might be expecting

federal funds to automatically flow back to Obama's home turf may be in for a rude surprise if a local funding commitment isn't shown, some experts say.

"We have to show here in Illinois that we are serious about investing in our transportation infrastructure before we can convince lawmakers in Congress and the new administration in Washington that they should invest in Illinois," said Brian Imus, director of the Illinois Public Interest Research Group.

Congress will decide next year how to spend transportation dollars over the next six years. The action at the polls in California and other states on Election Day demonstrates public support for investment to solve problems and create new jobs.

"We are seeing that people are starting to realize the value of investing in infrastructure as a way to stimulate the economy," Imus said. "Here in the Midwest, we can make the case that if we are doing a bailout for Wall Street, we can invest in viable local projects that have huge benefits for the regional economy as well as the environment."

Contact Getting Around at [jhilkevitch@tribune.com](mailto:jhilkevitch@tribune.com) or c/o the Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611. Read recent columns at [www.chicagotribune.com/gettingaround](http://www.chicagotribune.com/gettingaround).

## **MAYOR DALEY, CTA OFFICIALS INTRODUCE THE NEW FLYER ARTICULATED HYBRID BUS**

12/03/2008

**150 New Buses Offer Reduced Emissions, Better Fuel Economy, Increased Reliability**

The Chicago Transit Authority has begun operating the first of its 150 New Flyer Articulated Hybrid buses, which will improve service, reduce engine emissions, relieve congestion and save money, Mayor Richard M. Daley and transit officials said today.

"As the rest of the hybrid buses are placed into service, the CTA will become part of a small, elite group of transit agencies that have a sizeable fleet of hybrid electric buses," Daley said in a news conference held at the CTA's 103rd Street Garage.

"These buses will help the CTA save money, operate in a safe and environmentally-friendly way and improve bus service for the thousands of people who depend on it every day to get around the city.

"In this difficult economy, we need to be creative and responsible in managing government so that we can provide the services that are needed in a way our taxpayers and residents can afford," Daley said.

The hybrid articulated bus is at least 30% more fuel efficient than the current non-hybrid articulated buses in CTA's fleet.



The articulated hybrids are able to hold up to 125 riders – the buses they are scheduled to replace are able to accommodate up to 80 riders.

"We are pleased to introduce these new articulated hybrid buses to replace older bus models along some of our busiest routes," said CTA President Ron Huberman.

"Older buses are costly to maintain and break down more frequently. As these new hybrid buses continue to arrive and are phased into service, not only are we improving fuel efficiency and adding capacity to our fleet, we are also able to provide more reliable service to our customers," he said.

The 22 buses now operating have been phased into service since mid-October and the rest will arrive by summer, 2009.

The articulated hybrid buses are equipped with a parallel drive system, similar to a hybrid system found in a car. Hybrid buses significantly reduce emissions compared with standard diesel buses and help CTA not only continue to meet, but exceed the new emissions standard. Hybrid buses are quieter, cleaner and run more smoothly than conventional systems.

Characteristics of the bus include a plug-in feature that allows the batteries on the bus to remain charged when the bus is not in use. Power is drawn from the batteries to operate the auxiliary heater and circulate warm coolant through the engine block during overnight storage during cold weather. This eliminates the need to idle buses for startup.

The bus has a smaller engine than traditional articulated buses. It uses the same low-emission engine that is used in CTA's newest 40-foot buses. The engines have additional emissions technology – a diesel particulate filter – that removes soot as the exhaust passes through the exhaust system. The buses are 1,000 pounds lighter than their original design by using the smaller engine and a carbon steel frame that replaces a stainless steel frame.

LED passenger lighting on the buses makes them even more environmentally friendly. The lights are long lasting and reduce maintenance associated with passenger lighting systems – there are no bulbs to change. Since the buses eliminate the use of fluorescent tubes, it will eliminate CTA's need to dispose of harmful mercury when replacing bulbs.

CTA estimates that the hybrid buses will save the agency nearly \$7 million annually in maintenance, parts and labor costs over buses currently in service including more than \$900,000 annually in fuel costs. CTA also saved \$60,000 on the price of each hybrid bus by assuming the last contract option from King County Metro – Seattle's public transit agency – for the bus lease.

The buses also have a total of ten security cameras including three located on the exterior of the bus. There is a front facing camera in addition to two curb-side rear facing cameras that look down the side of the bus – one above the front doors and the other near the rear doors. There are seven cameras viewing the interior of the bus.

"These buses are part of the future of public transportation across our nation – and once again Chicago is taking the lead," Daley said.

Today's announcement followed yesterday's announcement that the city had reached agreement with a private firm on a long-term agreement to operate the city's parking meters.

Daley said the parking meter agreement will help protect the city's finances and its working families in both the short and long terms.

The addition of the hybrid buses to the CTA fleet and the parking meter agreement are examples of the kind of out-of-the-box thinking the city has used to avoid some of the problems other cities now face, Daley said.

CTA's lease cost will be approximately \$13.4 million per year. The terms of the agreement allow CTA to lease the buses for 12 years and retain ownership at the conclusion of the lease. Leasing allowed CTA to begin to take delivery of the buses now, rather than waiting until sufficient capital funds were available to purchase the buses.

"To its credit, over the past several years the CTA has made many improvements in management," Daley said.

"The addition of these hybrid buses is another way we continue to get the most from every tax dollar and to manage the system better so that there is more money available to invest in service delivery.

"At the end of the day, what's important is that we use every available tool to have a public transportation system that works for our people," he said.

## **Chicago Transit Board Approves Green Grants to Improve CTA's Energy Efficiency**

12/04/2008

The Chicago Transit Board today approved funding that will bring solar tracking skylights and new energy efficient lighting to several CTA bus garages, rail stations and facilities. The projects are expected to provide energy savings for the CTA amounting to approximately \$700,000 annually.

CTA will receive grants from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (CECF) and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity



(DCEO) for the projects. As a stipulation for receiving the grants, CTA is providing funds for the projects also.

"These initiatives build on the CTA's commitment to operate in a cleaner and greener manner," said CTA President Ron Huberman. "Ultimately the upgrades will enable us to improve energy efficiency and reduce CTA utility costs thereby leading to more efficient operations and savings for the agency."

CECF will provide a grant for up to \$250,000 for the installation of solar tracking skylights at the North Park and 74th Street bus garages. The total cost of the project is not expected to exceed \$500,000.

Solar tracking skylights track the sun's rays and use a reflective panel and diffuser that allows up to 400 percent more natural light into buildings than standard skylights. The CTA expects the units to reduce lighting cost by at least 35 percent at each of the two locations.

Installation of the panels is expected to begin in spring 2009.

In addition, DCEO will provide a grant for \$438,598 for CTA to install new energy efficient lighting and fixtures at 11 facilities including the 103rd, Chicago and 77th Street bus garages, South Shops facility, the central warehouse and up to six rail stations.

The estimated total cost of the lighting retrofit project is approximately \$1.07 million with CTA using capital funds to make up the balance; however, the agency will reap immediate benefits through savings of approximately \$662,000 in annual electricity costs once the installation is completed.

## **Chicago Transit Board Approves Permanent Addition of West Side/West Suburban Service Enhancements**

12/04/2008

### **Improvements to #60, #65 Bus Routes and Green Line Service Also Adopted**

The Chicago Transit Board today approved the permanent adoption of service enhancements for the West Side/West Suburban Corridor which were first introduced in 2006. Following the initial enhancements, the experimental period was extended in order to make adjustments based upon customer feedback, ridership trends and evaluation by CTA staff.

"The service enhancements have successfully provided additional transit options designed to meet the demand due to both residential and commercial growth on the West Side and Near West Suburbs," said CTA President Ron Huberman. "Service improvements such as these not only benefit customers, but also the communities in which they live and work."

"CTA has worked hard to use the resources available to design service that is focused on customer needs," added Huberman. "As a result of our efforts, CTA ridership continues to increase and through this substantial investment in additional transit service for the West Side and western suburbs, we expect to see ridership continue to grow."

Since the initial experiment began, bus ridership within the corridor has increased 14 percent, compared to a 7 percent increase on non-west side bus service. Specifically, new express routes such as the X54 Cicero have helped improve convenience for riders and contributed to ridership increases on the route (a 16.8 percent increase since 2006). Improved frequency on the #12 Roosevelt route has resulted in a 36 percent increase in ridership since 2006. Rail ridership increased 19.4 percent compared to 2.9 percent on non-west side rail service.

### **Rail**

**Pink Line** – Service operates from the 54th/Cermak station to the Loop elevated daily from 4 a.m. to 1 a.m.

**Blue Line** – The frequency of service has increased on the Forest Park and O'Hare branches. Trains to O'Hare operate approximately every 7 to 8 minutes during the morning rush and throughout the day, and every 4 to 7 minutes during the evening rush. Trains to Forest Park operate every 5 to 10 minutes during the morning rush and every 6 to 8 minutes during the evening rush, improved from every 15 minutes.

### **Bus**

**#7 Harrison** – Connects to the Polk Street station on the Pink Line at all times of operation. It continues service to the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Greyhound bus terminal, Union Station, the Main Post Office and Domestic Violence Court. Hours of operation have been extended to 10 p.m. and service during the morning and midday operates more frequently.

**#X9 Ashland Express** – This route provides weekday express (limited stops) service between the Irving Park Red line station and 95th and Ashland. The service improves north-south connections to the Illinois Medical District and to the CTA's Blue, Green, Orange, Pink and Red (Sheridan station) Lines. In addition, the Paulina station is one block west of Ashland on the Brown Line.

**#11 Lincoln/Sedgwick** – Service on the #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick route extends north of Fullerton and south of North Avenue during peak hours. Additionally, weekday service on the #11 extends west along Van Buren from Franklin to Clinton to create a direct connection to the #38 Ogden/Taylor, for service to the West Side and the Illinois Medical District.

**#12 Roosevelt** – Morning and evening rush period service operates more frequently running every 6 to 10 minutes during the morning rush period, every 7.5 to 10 minutes during the evening rush period and every 10



minutes during midday. On Saturdays, frequency of service is every 12 minutes in the morning and evenings, and every 10 minutes during midday. Midday service operates every 12 minutes on Sunday.

**#X20 Madison/Washington Express** – The route provides service from Austin to downtown with fewer stops along Madison, Warren, Washington and Randolph. Additional bus stops west of Central Park on Madison have been added to provide more convenient access to customers further west. Eastbound the #X20 travels from Austin to Central Park on Madison, and from Central Park to Michigan on Warren and Washington. Westbound to Austin the #X20 travels from Michigan Avenue on Madison, Jefferson, Randolph, Ogden, Washington, Central Park and back to Madison. By operating on Madison west of Central Park the #X20 reduces wait times by providing customers a choice between express or local service on the existing #20 Madison.

**#21 Cermak** – The route combines the #21 Cermak route and former #25 West Cermak service into one route and provides service to North Riverside Park Mall from approximately 5 a.m. until 11 pm.

In addition, on weekends (instead of every other bus) all #21 Cermak buses operate to the North Riverside Park Mall during mall business hours. The change will provide more frequent service to the mall and improve connections to Pace bus routes #304, #305, #307, #311 and #322.

**#38 Ogden/Taylor** – Midday service operates every 15 minutes enhancing connections between the east and west campuses of UIC and to the Polk Pink Line station.

The route terminates at California/Ogden, which allows for continued service to Mt. Sinai Hospital and meets the demand for service along the higher ridership portions of the route.

**#52 Kedzie/California** – Service to 63rd Place and Kedzie operates at all times the route is in service.

**#52A South Kedzie** – This service complements the #52 Kedzie/California and improves travel in the corridor and the efficiency of both routes. The #52A South Kedzie service terminates at the Kedzie Orange Line at all times. Transfer to the #52 Kedzie/California is required for travel north of the Orange Line.

**#X54 Cicero Express** – The #X54 travels from the Jefferson Park station and bus terminal on the O'Hare branch of the Blue Line to the Midway station on the Orange Line, making connections at the Cicero stations on the Green Line, Forest Park branch of the Blue Line and Pink Line.

**#86 Narragansett/Ridgeland** – Service operates to Milwaukee/Imlay via Nagle and continues to serve Wright College and the Green Line from the far

Northwest Side. This routing provides a one-seat ride along Narragansett/Nagle between the far Northwest Side and Oak Park, later evening service along Nagle and connections to CTA bus routes #56A, #68, #81W, #88 and Pace #270.

**#90 Harlem** – The route now extends south to CTA's Harlem/Lake Green Line station and Metra's Oak Park station, and provides a connection between the Harlem Blue Line station on the O'Hare branch and the Green Line in Oak Park. The extension also provides an O'Hare Airport connection via the Harlem Blue Line station for customers who are south of Grand, and connects to Metra rail stations on the Milwaukee West Line at Mont Clare and the Union Pacific West Line in Oak Park. The route also provides connections to CTA bus route #72 and Pace bus routes #305, #309, #313 and #318.

**#91 Austin** – This route serves CTA's Jefferson Park Blue Line station on the O'Hare branch and Metra's Jefferson Park station. When school is in session select buses travel to Taft High School via Nagle.

In addition, service enhancements for the #60 Blue Island/26th, #65 Grand and the Green Line were made permanent as well.

**#60 Blue Island/26th** – Running times have been adjusted on weekdays to provide more reliable service.

**#65 Grand** – Evening hours from Navy Pier have been extended from 7 p.m. until 10 p.m. and more frequent weekend service has been added. These improvements enhance access to jobs on Michigan Avenue and Navy Pier on the east, and to the new employment centers at Wal-Mart and the rebuilt Brickyard Mall on the west.

**Green Line** – The frequency of service has been increased during the morning and evening rush periods. Service to Harlem/Lake, and Ashland/63rd and East 63rd is now every 7 to 10 minutes.

## CHICAGO TRANSIT BOARD APPROVES 2009 BUDGET

11/13/08

### Board Reduces Fare Increase/Service Levels Maintained at Current Levels

The Chicago Transit Board today approved a 2009 operating budget that maintains service levels and eliminates a total of 632 positions. Although the Board approved a fare increase effective January 1, 2009, it modified the budget so that the changes to pass prices will be less than the 20 percent increase originally proposed.

The 2009 budget is \$1.321 billion. CTA expects to generate \$598.2 million in fares and other revenue and anticipates \$723.3 million in public funding. The



economic downturn and significantly higher prices for energy, fuel and materials all impact the 2009 budget. In addition, tax revenues from the new State funding legislation have not achieved anticipated levels. The unanticipated free ride programs reduced projected fare revenues as well. These factors are exacerbated by the lack of a State capital program; without designated capital resources to replace aging equipment and infrastructure, the CTA has to devote additional operating funds to make necessary maintenance and repairs.

"In today's economic climate government agencies, private businesses and individual households are facing budget challenges and CTA is no exception; nevertheless, the Board takes very seriously the public comments it receives and this year customers were very concerned about potential fare increases," said Chicago Transit Board Chairman Carole Brown. "After careful consideration of all the factors that go into putting together the budget, the Board has amended the President's recommendation to provide some relief to our customers. Instead of raising pass fares by 20 percent, the budget passed by the board will only raise them by about 15 percent."

This proposed change would reduce CTA's projected fare box revenue by about \$2.9 million and the difference would be made up with the projected cost savings from changes to the CTA's Supplemental Retirement Plan, said Brown.

Under the revised budget, a 1-Day pass would increase from \$5 to \$5.75; a 3-Day pass would increase from \$12 to \$14; a 7-Day pass would go from \$20 to \$23; and a 30-Day pass would increase from \$75 to \$86. The current 2-Day and 5-Day passes will be eliminated. University Pass (U-Pass) fares, which are currently \$0.70 per day, will increase by 15 percent for the Fall 2009 term.

Cash, Transit Card and Chicago Card fares will still increase by \$0.25 to \$0.50 depending on the fare media used. Reduced fares will remain the same as 2008 levels so fares will not increase for people with disabilities or students.

"CTA will continue to examine its operations and find ways to streamline costs, but will do so in a manner that does not adversely impact the quality of the service we provide our customers," said CTA President Ron Huberman. "Customer service and satisfaction is our primary focus and we will continue to address the issues that concern our customers the most."

Initiatives such as Bus Tracker, Slow Zone removal, reduction in big gaps in bus service, upgrading the fleet and improving customer communications remain high priorities.

Also approved as part of the budget was the CTA's 2009-2013 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). It totals

\$3.0 billion, with \$2.9 billion in projects to eliminate slow zones, renew assets, overhaul and replace the fleet, and bring the system to a state of good repair. In addition \$40.0 million is programmed for the completion of the Brown Line Capacity Expansion Project, a vital system expansion.

The CIP includes a projection of \$300 million each year during 2010-2013 from a successor to the Illinois FIRST program. The RTA has advised the CTA to anticipate that a State capital funding program will be in place by 2010.

The program does not divert scarce capital funds to balance the operating budget. The transfer of capital funds to operating would cause additional critical projects necessary for continued progress to a state of good repair to be delayed or cancelled.

Funding identified in the CIP will only partially meet the CTA's needs to bring its system into a state of good repair. An estimated \$6.8 billion remains unfunded over the five-year period of this CIP. This is due to the continued aging of assets and the lack of a new State capital program. Although a proposed new State funding program is projected to begin in 2010, projects which may be funded with these capital dollars will remain a part of the CTA's unfunded need until a State program is passed and funds are appropriated.

In addition, to meet the needs of future growth in the region, the CTA will request \$4.3 billion for expansion projects such as the Circle Line, and the Red, Orange and Yellow Line extensions. Maintaining the existing bus and rail system is a top priority; however it is also important to improve the connectivity and usefulness of the system by adding strategic connections and line extensions. As the bus and rail system operates more efficiently, the population of the entire Chicago region will benefit.

The 2009 budget is a performance-based budget process that examined the activities of each organizational unit to understand which could be made more efficient, reduced or eliminated in order for CTA to weather the economic challenges.

## **PACE BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES 2009 BUDGET**

November 12, 2008 6:00:00 PM

Fare increase for fixed route service and resolution to 7-Day Pass issue are included

Fares on Pace buses will increase for the first time in nearly eight years this January, following approval of the proposed 2009 budget by the agency's Board of Directors. The general fare increase takes effect January 1 and raises adult fares on fixed route service by \$0.25. Also on that date, Pace will stop accepting the CTA 7-



Day, Visitor/Fun Passes and U-Pass, though an alternative Pace/CTA 7-Day pass will be instituted.

Citing budget pressures, specifically expectations of continued volatility in the price of fuel, increased costs of labor, services, and materials, as well as the oversight of the RTA, which urged a small fare increase to stabilize Pace's 3-year business plan. The regular adult fare will increase by \$0.25 to \$1.75, and adult fares on Metra Feeder service as well as in Local Fare Zones- found in Joliet, Aurora, Elgin, and Waukegan- will increase by \$0.50 to \$1.75. Vanpool fares, except the Advantage program, will increase by 10% beginning in January. Pace Board Chairman Rick Kwasneski said, "We've been able to avoid a fare increase for many years thanks to our efforts to streamline costs and operate efficiently. We hope riders understand that this small fare increase is the fiscally responsible thing to do by helping to expand service in the region while avoiding the need for a potentially steeper increase in the future." The last fare increase on Pace fixed route service was implemented in April, 2001. The budget contains no fare increases for ADA Paratransit service, as the Pace Board awaits reports from the Blue Ribbon Committee on Paratransit and an RTA audit of paratransit operations.

Other budget-related action included the creation of a new Pace/CTA 7-Day pass. The new pass will be sold at the beginning of 2009 and will be sold to passengers that use both CTA and Pace service for their commute. After December 31, 2008, Pace will no longer accept the CTA 7-Day Pass- only the joint pass will be accepted on Pace buses. The new pass is the result of nearly a year of discussion between Pace, RTA, and CTA regarding Pace's acceptance of the existing pass, which will have been used for an estimated 7.7 million trips on Pace during 2008- roughly 23% of all fixed route ridership. Pace received no reimbursement during 2008 for trips for which the 7-Day pass was used as the fare media, resulting in an estimated revenue loss of \$6.4 million- the value of the trips taken. "This is not a perfect alternative, but we're glad to have reached agreement on this new pass as opposed to outright elimination of a 7-Day pass on our buses, which would have been very difficult for many of the people who use it," said Kwasneski. The new joint Pace/CTA pass will be sold for a \$5.00 premium over the cost of the CTA-only 7 Day Pass, which is proposed to be sold for \$24 pending CTA Board approval. As a result, the joint pass would be sold for \$29. Pace is also eliminating acceptance of the CTA's Visitor/Fun Passes and the U-Pass. The CTA/Pace 30-Day pass, Chicago Card and Chicago Card Plus, and CTA stored value farecards will all continue to be accepted on Pace buses.

The Suburban Service operating budget, comprised of fixed route bus, vanpool, and non-ADA dial-a-ride programs, totals \$204.6 million. That budget includes \$7.5 million to be invested regionally on development of new or expanded service. Pace intends to work with local and regional stakeholders to develop plans for how

and where to improve service. Operation of ADA paratransit service in Chicago and suburban areas comprises the Regional ADA Paratransit budget, and amounts to \$107.2 million. The budget for Pace's capital program adds up to \$43.3 million and will be used largely for replacement of aging buses and infrastructure improvements, both of which have been deferred in recent years because of the need to divert capital funds to cover shortfalls to the operating budget. "We have a critical need to replace nearly 20% of the buses in our fleet, and it's our hope that state leaders will be able to reach consensus in the coming year on a new capital plan," said Kwasneski.

Pace held 13 public hearings throughout its service area regarding its proposed 2009 budget and accepted comments via e-mail and post. A total of 96 people attended the hearings.

## **CTA and Pace Bus Create Joint 7-Day Unlimited Ride Pass**

11/13/2008

Today the Chicago Transit Board authorized an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and Pace creating a new joint 7-Day pass that can be used to travel on the CTA and Pace. Pace provides suburban bus service, with most of its routes providing convenient connections to CTA and Metra.

CTA's 30-Day passes and stored value cards – Chicago Card, Chicago Card Plus and magnetic strip transit cards – may still be used on Pace buses. Pace has announced it no longer will accept CTA's 1-Day, 3-Day, 7-Day and U-Pass fare media on its system effective January 1, 2009.

The joint 7-Day pass was created to accommodate those riders who use both CTA and Pace to make their connections from one to the other seamlessly. Currently, nearly 87,500 CTA 7-day passes are sold in a week. Of the passes sold, four to five percent of the total rides used occur on Pace buses.

The joint CTA/Pace 7-Day pass will cost \$5 more than the price of a regular CTA 7-Day pass and is available beginning January 1. Pace will receive \$5 from each pass sold less an administrative fee, which is a change from the old system that enabled the RTA to reimburse Pace for rides taken on its system using CTA fare media.

The new passes may be purchased wherever CTA monthly passes are sold – with the exception of visitor pass machines. The new pass offers the same unlimited rides benefits of CTA's 7-Day pass.

"This new unlimited ride 7-Day pass continues the convenient and affordable connections between the CTA and Pace that customers presently enjoy," said CTA



President Ron Huberman. "With public transportation becoming an increasingly popular option for commuters, it's important for Chicago's transit services to be as accessible and efficient as possible."

## **Metra settles suit in fatal crash for \$11 million**

**Engineer in '05 wreck on South Side ignored speed limits, NTSB said**

By Richard Wronski | Tribune reporter  
November 13, 2008

Even as Metra agreed to pay \$11 million Wednesday to the families of two women killed when a speeding train derailed in 2005, the commuter line said a high-tech system designed to prevent similar crashes won't be in place until August.

Jane Cuthbert, 22, of Oak Forest, and Allison Walsh, 38, of New Lenox were aboard an inbound Rock Island Line train car that hurtled off the tracks and slammed into a steel bridge on Chicago's South Side on Sept. 17, 2005. An additional 117 passengers were injured in the pileup.

Cuthbert, a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was on her way to a training session for volunteers who teach English as a second language.

Walsh, a research technician at Brookfield Zoo, was traveling downtown to make a presentation at a zoological conference.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the probable cause was engineer Michael Smith's "inattentiveness to signal indications and his failure to operate the train in accordance with the signal . . . and speed restrictions" at the 48th Street crossover.

The maximum speed at the crossover was 10 m.p.h. The train entered the crossover at 69 m.p.h.

Metra has yet to install multimillion-dollar technology that safety experts say prevents train collisions and speeding accidents by overriding human error.

The NTSB faulted Metra's lack of a satellite-based system as a key reason for the derailment. A similar accident occurred at the same crossover in 2003, causing dozens of injuries but no deaths.

Metra said Wednesday that since the 2005 derailment, it has "made significant investments in technology and infrastructure along with enhanced engineer training in an effort to make certain that this type of loss does not occur in the future."

The commuter line said it is awaiting federal approval of an emergency train management system that could override an operator's mistakes. It plans to install the equipment on the Rock Island line in August at a cost of \$13.8 million, spokeswoman Judy Pardonnet said.

"Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to these two families for the tragic losses they experienced in 2005," Metra said in a statement. "The deaths of these young women are the only onboard passenger fatalities in Metra's 25-year history."

The settlement was reached just as the two wrongful-death lawsuits filed by the families were scheduled for trial.

Smith long had insisted he did nothing wrong and said signals indicated his train was clear to go straight at the higher speed. But in an Oct. 21 filing in connection with the lawsuit, he admitted operating the train through the crossover faster than the safe speed.

Smith was fired in 2006. The crossover has been removed.

Walsh is survived by her father, Warren, her mother, Kathy, and her younger brother, Andrew.

Cuthbert lived with her widowed mother. She is survived by her older brother, Mark, who was an officer in the Air Force and had been deployed to the Middle East just two weeks before the derailment, according to her attorney.

The victims' families could not be reached for comment.

The settlement was "an acknowledgment of the wrong which was done to their families," said attorney Daniel Kotin of the Corboy & Demetrio law firm. [rwronski@tribune.com](mailto:rwronski@tribune.com)

## **South Shore's double-deck cars arrive**

November 22, 2008  
By Erik Potter Post-Tribune staff writer

**CHESTERTON** - The South Shore Railroad has its first new train cars since 2000.

Two of the new double-deck cars, which cost \$3.6 million each, crossed into Indiana early Wednesday morning and are now in the South Shore's main yard in Michigan City.

Crews are still working out the kinks and getting familiar with the new cars, evidenced by the stuck emergency brake that kept them from bringing the cars for their Cotillion unveiling at the November meeting of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District on Friday.

NICTD will receive four more cars in December, January and February, for a total of 14.

The new cars weigh 145,000 pounds (27,000 pounds heavier than the single-level cars), and hold 111



passengers, making them the second-largest in the 82-car fleet.

In addition to their two-level seating, the cars will feature handicapped-accessible restrooms complete with lights that indicate when the restrooms are occupied.

Identical to the METRA train cars in suburban Chicago, the cars' seats feature movable backs that can slide to face either direction, meaning a group of four passengers can adjust the seats to face each other.

Arrival of the cars marks the second big-ticket benefit of the Regional Development Authority in as many months. The RDA, tasked with supporting the South Shore, among other things, funded a third of the \$51 million price tag for the 14 cars.

The cars will allow NICTD, which operates the South Shore, to take a fresh look at their schedule. All 14 cars are set to go into service in March.

NICTD spokesman John Parsons said having the extra cars will likely mean additional service at the "shoulders" of peak travel times.

A common complaint from South Shore riders is the steep drop-off in train frequency just before and after the morning and afternoon rush hours.

The NICTD board also approved a raise for General Manager Gerry Hanas. The raise is not a specific dollar amount, but rather 1 percent of the fees paid to NICTD for use of its track by the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad freight line.

Because the amount is based on how many miles of track the freight line uses, it will vary from year to year, ranging anywhere from zero to \$25,000. This year, it would have been about \$18,000.

Hanas' current salary is \$144,000, which he'll continue to receive as a base plus the new raise.

Board Chairman Mark Yagelski, the LaPorte County Council representative, said that the increase was necessary to compensate Hanas for extra duties he has picked up during the South Shore extension effort and the purchase of the rail cars, which Yagelski credits Hanas for fast-tracking.

Also, installation of overhead wires that supply power to the South Shore trains has been completed between 115th Street in Chicago and Gary. The new wiring, called the catenary, features a constant-tension system that counteracts the seasonal expansion and contraction of the electrical wires.

Maintaining constant tension is expected to increase system reliability, especially in the winter.

Bids for the next section of catenary work between Gary and Michigan City are expected to be opened in January.

Contact Erik Potter at 648-3120, or [epotter@post-trib.com](mailto:epotter@post-trib.com). Comment on this story at [www.post-trib.com](http://www.post-trib.com).

## **Euclid Corridor Health Line is a strong RX for Cleveland's once and future Main Street**

Posted by Steven Litt November 09, 2008 Cleveland Plain Dealer

Cleveland, a city fighting to reverse decades of decline, has had a lousy fall so far this year.

PNC Financial Services Group of Pittsburgh just bought National City Bank in a purchase engineered by the federal government. Eaton Corp. wants to move its headquarters to the suburbs. Neighborhoods are being hollowed out by the nationwide mortgage meltdown. Big development projects downtown and in the Flats have been frozen by the global credit crisis.

Amid the gloom, however, the city has just acquired a bright and important new asset. The recently completed \$200 million rapid transit bus line on Euclid Avenue has turned the city's once-crumbling Main Street into a well-designed image of hope and renewal.

From the fresh brick paving on downtown sidewalks to the sparkling glass-and-steel bus stations designed by architect Robert P. Madison of Cleveland, the project has dramatically improved the appearance of a street essential to the city's psyche.

Riding the Health Line - as it has been named by the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, which together will pay \$6.25 million over 25 years for the privilege - is a curiously out-of-city experience.

A couple of years ago, Euclid Avenue was an eyesore complete with potholes, cracked paving and sunken sidewalks that filled with puddles during heavy rains.

Now you board a shiny custom-designed bus, powered by a hybrid diesel-electric engine, and peer out the windows on a smartly revamped street planted with 1,500 trees and lined with miles of new sidewalks, public art, streetlights and landscaping.

The RTA project has created a clean, crisp foreground that accentuates the majesty of the Romanesque and Gothic Revival churches that dot the avenue. It underscores the homey optimism of the new townhouses along the avenue east of East 79th Street. And it frames views of the downtown skyline in ways that produce a shiver of excitement.



Financed primarily by the state of Ohio and the federal government, the project shows how smart investments in mass transit and public space can help struggling cities turn themselves around.

The project also is a reminder - after the collapse of the I-35 bridge in Minneapolis and the catastrophic failure of levees in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina - that America still has the ability to tackle high-quality, large-scale infrastructure projects with style.

That's important at a moment in which the country has elected a new president who wants to invest heavily in urban infrastructure to create jobs, jump-start a sputtering economy and revitalize cities.

Just two weeks after the ribbon-cutting, the Euclid Corridor project is becoming a national model. Joseph Calabrese, director of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, which masterminded and built the bus line, said the agency has recently entertained large civic delegations from San Antonio and Nashville, Tenn.

Other cities have ordered 50 of the hybrid vehicles designed especially for Cleveland by New Flyer of Winnipeg, Manitoba and built in Saint Cloud, Minn. The RTA gets royalties from those orders, because it paid for research and development needed to create the vehicles.

The question now is whether we can allow ourselves to feel good about any of this. We should, but it's been hard.

Critics complained about the two years of surgery on the avenue, which disrupted traffic and killed some small businesses. The work, however, was absolutely necessary; it replaced water and sewer lines that dated as far back as the turn of the 20th century.

Critics also called the Health Line a boondoggle, saying it will do little more than provide a marginal improvement over the former No. 6 bus line, which was already the city's most successful and heavily used route. The new line will cover the distance between downtown and University Circle in 20 minutes, 10 minutes less than the old line.

It's true that when measured purely in cost efficiency per rider, the project didn't score high on tests required by the Federal Transit Administration as a condition for funding. But the project did meet those basic requirements.

More important, though, it scored high on estimates of the economic development it would encourage along Euclid Avenue, which is flanked by two universities, two medical centers and a host of businesses and cultural institutions. Ultimately, the growth could push the line well beyond the 9,000 riders a day who used the old No. 6. Those riders will likely include a wide range of new

residents and workers in the city's growing medical and educational sectors.

Earlier this year, in fact, the value of development projects recently completed, under way or planned along the avenue between Public Square and University Circle had reached \$4.3 billion. The entire amount couldn't be attributed specifically to the RTA project, but many developers said the impending completion of the line was a major factor in their decision to launch housing and office projects along the avenue.

Sadly, the recent banking crisis has stalled private commercial and residential development. Developer Doug Price, for example, can't get financing for his proposed \$200 million makeover of the vacant Ameritrust complex at East Ninth Street and Euclid Avenue.

But the RTA project has set the stage for a rebound that should be far more robust than it would have been if Euclid Avenue had continued to rot.

That said, the Health Line is downright modest in comparison to the stunning new airports, bridges and high-speed rail lines across China. It's not a photogenic masterpiece like the subway line built in Bilbao, Spain, in 1995 or the 2004 Millau Viaduct in France, both designed by Lord Norman Foster of England.

The project is also anything but lavish. The brick sidewalks and granite curbs on the downtown section don't extend beyond Playhouse Square. In University Circle, the avenue is paved in asphalt, cheaper than the foot-thick concrete traffic lanes built downtown and in Midtown.

But the corner-cutting, though visible and lamentable, doesn't undermine the fundamental quality of the project as a solid example of urban design and city planning on a tight budget.

RTA originally conceived the project in the 1980s as the "Dual Hub" light-rail line, but found in the 1990s that a rail line would have cost \$700 million to \$800 million. Inspired by the rapid bus system in Curitiba, Brazil, RTA redesigned the Euclid Avenue project to achieve the speed and high-class feel of light rail at the lower cost of a bus line.

The core section of the line, from Public Square to University Circle, has center median stations on raised platforms designed to enable riders to step directly onto buses, as if they were rail cars. An innovative precision docking system makes it easy to align the buses with precise spots on the platforms, so riders know where to queue.

The 34 stations along the line are smartly tailored gems. They have a light, transparent feel that makes them look both elegant and safe. They complement the



architecture of nearby buildings, rather than obscure views.

Less noticeable are the ingenious ways in which landscape architects from Sasaki Associates in Watertown, Mass., redesigned the avenue from building face to building face to include 5-foot-wide bicycle paths and tapering islands with flower beds at the bus stations.

Squeezing all of that into a relatively narrow right-of-way, without noticeably shrinking sidewalks, took ingenuity and flexibility. RTA initially resisted the idea of bike lanes, but wisely agreed to include them after strong advocacy by the administration of former Mayor Jane Campbell.

Public art along the line, including tree grates and stainless-steel trash cans incised with typographical characters, looks both bland and cautious, as if designed to avoid offending anyone. But here, too, there are bright spots: The Seattle landscape architecture firm of Murase Associates designed intriguing and enigmatic earthworks in University Circle, made of rough blocks of Berea sandstone. They resemble strange geological outcrops emerging from the Earth in an unexpected place.

Having added a sparkling new amenity to Cleveland, RTA, the city and local community-development organizations will have to do an excellent job maintaining the Health Line, lest it become a new symbol of decay. The bashed and rusting new trash cans along the line, for example, should be repaired or replaced ASAP.

Quibbles aside, the Health Line is, overall, something that should make Clevelanders feel proud. It provides a strong physical and aesthetic link between the two most important economic engines in the region - downtown and University Circle.

The city now needs other major investments, including a new shipping port and a better link from University Circle to the interstate highway system. But with the Euclid Avenue project finished, the city is far, far better off than it would have been without it.

## Rail line stops sketched in

**Dearborn to airport route could be running by late 2010 would complement other transportation plans.**

Tanveer Ali / The Detroit News

**WESTLAND** -- Officials have pinpointed sites for rail stations serving Detroit Metro Airport and Dearborn along a proposed commuter rail line that planners hope will be running by October 2010.

Six miles from the new North Terminal, a planned station on county-owned land at Michigan and Henry Ruff would connect commuters to their flights via an airport shuttle. The station would be one of five along the line that would

share track with Amtrak and freight trains and include stops in Ypsilanti and at the New Center in Detroit.

Carmine Palombo, director of transportation for the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, said the train line is a key component of the ambitious plans for a mass transit system that could complement and add to the region's economy.

"The site gives us a lot of accessibility and with getting to and from the airport, it gives us good travel time," Palombo said.

Palombo said the project is one of several in planning stages, including a light-rail line along Woodward in Detroit and a commuter line from Livingston County to Ann Arbor. Palombo said he was optimistic the Ann Arbor-Detroit line will get off the ground, as it already has some political support, though cost estimates and funding proposals have yet to be decided.

After a multiyear study, Dearborn officials are considering an area south of Michigan Avenue near Elm as the site of the Dearborn Intermodal Rail Passenger Station. Officials say the transportation center, which has yet to receive funding, could make Dearborn a regional hub connecting train commuters to various bus lines, taxis and shuttles.

The city's economic and community development director Barry Murray said the site was chosen for its proximity to the city's business district and major attractions.

"We picked it because of proximity to the Henry Ford, downtown and the (University of Michigan) campus," Murray said.

An open house to show the plans for the station is scheduled in Dearborn from 4:30-7:30 p.m. Nov. 18 at the Ford Community & Performing Arts Center at 15801 Michigan.

In September, a regional transit commission unveiled its concept for a transportation system crisscrossing the Metro Detroit area with high-tech buses and light-rail lines over the next few decades. A progress report on regional transit issues is on the agenda for the SEMCOG Fall General Assembly, scheduled for 4:30 p.m. Nov. 20 at the Sterling Inn in Sterling Heights.

You can reach Tanveer Ali at (734) 462-2094 or [tali@detnews.com](mailto:tali@detnews.com).

## SEPTA puts out call for "smart card" proposals

By Paul Nussbaum

Inquirer Staff Writer



SEPTA has issued its long-awaited call for bids on an ambitious new electronic "smart card" fare-collection system, with plans to award a contract in the spring.

The system will replace the tokens, tickets and magnetic-stripe cards that passengers use on buses, subways, trains and trolleys.

SEPTA's request for proposals, issued Friday, is intentionally vague; leaving many specifics of how the system will work up to the companies that offer to build it. But the agency said it wanted a system that will allow passengers to use credit cards, prepaid SEPTA cards, even cell-phones to pay for their trips.

With a "smart card," passengers will be able to wave a card at a sensor on a turnstile or fare box and be on their way.

It will be several years before a new system can be built and installed. Cost estimates have ranged as high as \$100 million, although SEPTA urged bidders to offer innovative financing proposals, such as public-private partnerships, to reduce the cost to the agency.

The biggest challenge may be designing a system that works well on Regional Rail, since rail passengers do not enter through a single gate or door.

SEPTA told bidders they must come up with a system that addresses rail fare-collection "in a customer-friendly manner."

"SEPTA is really in uncharted territory here," said Matthew Mitchell of the Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers, noting that other transit agencies have not devised a high-tech system to collect rail fares.

Mitchell said "it is going to be very hard to improve on" the weekly and monthly passes that most regular rail commuters use. He said SEPTA should install simple vending machines at every rail station to accept credit-card payments.

Another challenge will be to create a smart card compatible with those used by other transit agencies. PATCO, which operates commuter trains between Philadelphia and South Jersey, this year installed a smart-card system, and NJ Transit is in the early stages of designing one.

Mayor Nutter's transportation chief, Rina Cutler, has said compatibility should be a high priority for SEPTA's fare system, so passengers can use a single card for travel, and perhaps even parking, throughout the region.

The deadline for companies to submit fare-collection proposals to SEPTA is March 17. The agency hopes to award a contract by April, general manager Joseph Casey said last month.

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

## **Commuter rail system has test run in Louisville**

WHAS11) -A commuter rail system in Louisville has been a topic for quite some time, but Saturday morning several people got a test ride to see just how efficient and feasible a commuter rail system would actually be.

"It's nice to see this many people here to catch a train," said Barry Barker, the Executive Director of TARC.

And something many Louisville officials say they want to see more of: people climbing aboard a "commuter" train headed to different parts of Jefferson, Hardin and Meade counties.

Saturday morning, Paducah and Louisville Railway hosted a "test run" of a commuter rail system, with several stops including Shively, Park hill, Riverfront and WestPoint.

The idea is to show people how easy it would be to hop on a train and head to work, for instance. It's an idea that is a long time coming.

"I think we'll see how easy it will be to get this started..." said John Owen of KY, IN Rail Advocates.

Officials hope that with an estimated speed of 60 mph people will find travel time comparable, if not better, than driving, which would ease traffic congestion. John Owen says high gas prices have made the commuter rail idea more of an option to seriously explore.

"That's definitely helped. Nashville's doing their demonstrations too and that's definitely helped."

This all comes with a hefty price tag, but officials hope to keep the cost below \$40 million. But that's \$40 million Louisville doesn't exactly have to spend.

"This is the type of thing that requires vision and planning," said John Yarmuth, (D) Rep. 3<sup>rd</sup> District. He believes such a rail system is still many years away.

So maybe in 10 to 20 years some of us will opt to climb aboard to travel around town.

Now, this isn't a light rail system. A commuter rail system goes longer distances than light rail.

## **Amtrak: Business, politics in train tug-of-war**

SARAH KARUSH

The Associated Press



**WASHINGTON** - Until Hurricane Katrina ripped up the railroad tracks east of the Mississippi, Amtrak's Sunset Limited ran from Los Angeles to Sanford, Fla. The tracks were repaired long ago, but Amtrak didn't return east of New Orleans.

The national passenger railroad has said that the service was ineffective and made little financial sense for a company with limited resources. But that explanation doesn't satisfy U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Fla., who chairs a rail subcommittee and whose district felt the impact of suspended service.

Thanks to Brown, comprehensive Amtrak legislation recently signed into law includes a requirement that the railroad come up with a plan to bring back the Sunset Limited.

That case illustrates a central paradox of Amtrak: Despite decades of pressure to run the national passenger railroad efficiently and even profitably, its managers aren't free to make their own business decisions if Congress disagrees.

Amtrak is a "two-headed beast," said David Laney, a Texas lawyer who chaired Amtrak's board from 2003 to 2007. "On the one hand, it's a private company ... that's told to run itself efficiently to make money. On the other hand, you have the concept of Amtrak as a public service provider."

Congress created Amtrak in 1970 from the wreckage of the nation's unprofitable private passenger rail service. Lawmakers structured it as a private corporation, with most of the stock held by the federal government, with the hope it would one day become self-supporting.

That goal has largely faded. Amtrak officials point out that passenger rail is subsidized throughout the world, and it gets about \$1.3 billion in federal funding a year.

Still, the Bush administration and Republicans in Congress have kept the pressure on the railroad to wean itself from subsidies, or at least reduce its need for them.

But any sudden moves by Amtrak to reshape itself in the name of efficiency could risk next year's funding. And few members of Congress want to lose the trains that serve their districts, no matter how much Amtrak loses on those routes.

"Congress is, of course, one of our biggest constituents," Amtrak spokesman Cliff Black said. "They provide considerable funding; therefore, they have considerable oversight."

He said the company considers demands like the one regarding the Sunset Limited to be "legitimate input" and would fully comply with the legislation.

Under the new law, Amtrak has until July to come up with a plan to restore service. The railroad is not

required to act on that plan, at least not yet. The law also directs Amtrak to conduct studies about establishing or expanding service in other places, including two Seattle-Chicago routes discontinued years ago.

The Sunset Limited, particularly the eastern portion, has long ranked as one of Amtrak's most problematic trains.

In fiscal 2004, the last full year before Katrina, the Sunset carried just 96,000 riders, including 37,000 east of New Orleans. The remaining, western portion carried 72,000 passengers in fiscal 2008, making it Amtrak's least popular long-distance train.

The most popular long-distance route called the Empire Builder, which links Chicago with the Pacific Northwest, had 554,000 riders.

The railroad was already discussing whether to discontinue the eastern portion of the Sunset when Katrina struck in August 2005, Laney recalled.

The hurricane allowed Amtrak to suspend, rather than stop, the service.

"It was an interesting political solution," Laney said.

Freight railroad CSX Corp., which owns the tracks, repaired them by spring of 2006. Black cited still unrepaired stations along the route as a reason the Amtrak service has not been restarted. In addition, Amtrak has redeployed Sunset Limited equipment to other lines to help ease a systemwide shortage of rail cars and locomotives due to an aging fleet and expanding service in some areas, he said.

But chief executive Alex Kummant has acknowledged that Amtrak has little interest in restoring the Sunset Limited.

"I don't really see any way to bring that service back at this point," he advised Brown at a hearing of her subcommittee last April. Aside from infrastructure problems, he added: "We have no budget for it."

He said the train, which ran overnight three times a week, was rarely on time and "never very effective."

Brown countered that the line is needed both for security reasons as an evacuation route and to provide her constituents access to Amtrak's network.

The demise of the Sunset "makes it literally impossible to go anywhere on the train except straight north," said Ron Phernetton, who used to pick up the train in Jacksonville, Fla., about 35 miles south of his home in southern Georgia.

Phernetton, who rode the train en route to visit relatives in Arizona and Minnesota, said he has curtailed his travel and made more trips by air, something he finds unpleasant and generally pricier than an Amtrak coach ticket booked far in advance.



Former passengers say the Sunset Limited could be improved by running daily rather than three times a week. They also want an end to chronic delays; a difficult goal given the train's western portion runs on a congested track owned by Union Pacific Corp.

Laney, the former Amtrak chairman, said he was skeptical there was any way to run an effective New Orleans-Florida service: "If it were your company and you were trying to make money that wouldn't be part of your company for very long."

## San Pedro trolley study highlights issues

By Donna Littlejohn Staff Writer

Ever since the one-mile Waterfront Red Car line was launched five years ago, port and community leaders have wanted to expand the electric rail trolley.

And while several suggested destinations remain on the table, an ongoing feasibility study highlights some of the many challenges to bring the Red Car into downtown San Pedro, north to Wilmington and along North Gaffey Street to the new Target store.

Harbor commissioners were given an update this week on findings from the \$9 million feasibility study conducted by Wilson & Co., which was hired in 2006 to examine expanding the Red Car.

An extension taking the line to Cabrillo Beach and the outer harbor is included in the waterfront redevelopment study now being circulated for comments.

But many business leaders would like to see the line looped into downtown - using Fifth and Seventh streets.

"We realize it would be a huge endeavor and it's not going to be easy," said Camilla Townsend, CEO and manager of the San Pedro Peninsula Chamber of Commerce. "But we really would like to see it come into downtown, it would be such a good connection.

"It would take away the intimidation of Harbor Boulevard, which seems to be a psychological barrier" separating the waterfront from the downtown shopping areas.

The 1.4-mile addition into downtown would cost \$26.2 million, designers said.

Taking the line into Wilmington (three miles) would cost \$46.5 million.

The goal is to make the Red Car line more practical.

Currently, the line is limited to Harbor Boulevard and connects the cruise ship terminal to Ports O' Call.

If all of the expansion points were to be done, it would bring the trolley line up to 9.7 miles.

Port officials also continue to look at building a Red Car maintenance facility (which is estimated to cost \$8.6

million) and a Red Car Museum (estimated at \$3.4 million).

Harbor commissioners suggested formulating a specific project and then looking for funding in grants to pay for the system.

[donna.littlejohn@dailybreeze.com](mailto:donna.littlejohn@dailybreeze.com)

## Extra transit service won't start until at least June

JOSEPH TURNER; [joe.turner@thenewstribune.com](mailto:joe.turner@thenewstribune.com)  
Published: November 8th, 2008 12:30 AM

Don't expect to see much new bus- or train-related activity in Pierce County in the wake of this week's overwhelming passage of the \$17.9 billion ballot measure for Sound Transit - at least, not right away. In fact, Sound Transit won't even start collecting the higher sales tax approved by voters until spring - probably April 1 - and won't have any of that new money in hand until June. And that would be the earliest that any new bus service would be implemented. Other promised improvements to bus routes, commuter train stations and Link light rail in Tacoma are much further off.

"We have to adopt a new service plan," said Greg Walker, Sound Transit planning director. "The first service enhancements wouldn't hit until June." Passage of Proposition 1 was overwhelming in King and Snohomish counties, but support was tepid in Pierce County. But since the three counties are joined at the hip, the overall passage margin of 58 percent to 42 percent is what matters. In Pierce County, the "yes" vote was barely above 50 percent.

The original 1996 Sound Transit ballot measure also barely passed in Pierce County. That one authorized imposition of a 0.4 percent sales tax hike and a 0.3 percent excise tax on vehicles in most parts of the three counties.

## NEW TAXES

Prop. 1 renewed those taxes and authorizes an additional 0.5 percent increase in the sales tax. That means the tax rate rises for Tacoma, Lakewood, Bonney Lake, Puyallup, DuPont, Fife, Fircrest, University Place, Orting and most of the urbanized communities in Pierce County.

Tax on a \$10 purchase will rise to 93 cents from 88 cents, but not right away.

Outside the boundaries of Sound Transit and Pierce Transit taxing districts - Carbonado, Eatonville, Roy and South Prairie - the sales tax will remain at 7.8 percent. If Sound Transit makes its request to the state Department of Revenue by mid-January, the new sales



tax will be collected starting April 1, said state Revenue Department spokesman Mike Gowrylow. There's also a lag time in the distribution of sales tax collections, so taxes collected in April and May would be handed over to Sound Transit in June.

## **BUS SERVICE**

Pierce County is in line to get a 10 percent increase in bus service. That's 15,000 hours a year on top of the 150,000 hours of regional bus service that Sound Transit pays for today.

But exact routes and frequency have yet to be decided. Sound Transit is in the process of updating its bus service plan, and public meetings are being held in the region. In January, the transit agency will ask for public feedback on some immediate improvements, but the first of them would not happen until June. And any addition to service is likely to be on bus routes from Lakewood and Tacoma to Sea-Tac Airport and downtown Seattle in the nonpeak hours.

There also are plans for a couple of new bus routes, including one that would temporarily follow roughly the same corridor from Lakewood and Tacoma through the Puyallup Valley as the Sounder trains would once they are up and running from Lakewood. That "shadow route" also might include a stop in Federal Way, Walker said. Walker said Sound Transit does not yet have enough buses to provide more service during the heaviest commuting hours. The agency needs to buy 60 buses to add more peak-hour service, and that could take as long as 18 months, but as little as six to 10 months if the agency can piggyback a bus order on another transit agency's order, he said.

## **SOUNDER COMMUTER RAIL**

Exactly what will be done to improve commuter rail stations in Sumner, Puyallup, Tacoma, South Tacoma and Lakewood depends on what each community wants. The measure earmarked \$40 million to \$50 million for improvements to each station and left the specifics to be worked out.

For instance, there is some resistance to building a 600-stall parking garage at the Sumner Sounder station, so there might be parking at a remote location and shuttles that take riders to the station. Sound Transit planners wanted to give themselves and the community some flexibility on the final set of station improvements. Some of the plans might be done by the end of 2009, but construction would not take place until 2010 through 2013.

Sound Transit also plans to add four round-trip trains — a train a year from 2011 through 2014, Walker said. Station platforms will be long enough to accommodate eight-car trains, instead of seven-car trains.

## **LIGHT RAIL**

The light-rail line from downtown Seattle to Sea-Tac Airport is scheduled to open in December 2009. It will extend no further south than South 272nd Street in Federal Way by 2023. An extension to Tacoma would be contingent on a future ballot measure and a tax extension or increase.

Sound Transit will start buying some property along the southern route and will do some preliminary engineering.

But not for some years.

Of more immediate impact will be the expansion of the Link light-rail lines between the Tacoma Dome and downtown Tacoma.

Sound Transit, Pierce Transit and the City of Tacoma are working in partnership to study possible extensions. Each of the three would pony up about \$500,000 and undertake a study of possible routes, ridership and costs. Sound Transit has its money. The Pierce Transit board and the City Council still must approve their contributions in their respective 2009 budgets. Once again, there is no specific alignment in Prop. 1. Instead, there is \$80 million in Sound Transit money to pay a portion of any Link extension. That might be enough to cover part of the cost of extending Link from downtown Tacoma up Stadium Way past the Harvester Restaurant, up Division Avenue to Martin Luther King Jr. Way and west to South 19th Street. Tacoma traffic engineer Kurtis Kingsolver said the partnership would like to hire a consultant by March 2009. The study would take 18 to 24 months. "We would look at multiple routes that are not too steep and connect business districts, the ones that were around in the 1930s," he said.

That includes a route from the current Link terminus at Freighthouse Square east to Portland Avenue and then south to 56th Street, west to Pacific Avenue and then north to downtown. Another possible route would run from St. Joseph Hospital at South 19th Street west to Tacoma Community College, north to Sixth Avenue, then back toward downtown.

The study will look at costs — perhaps \$8 million to \$12 million per mile — projected ridership and other factors, he said. Joseph Turner: 253-597-8436

## **This time around, SMART gains passage**

### **North Bay's diesel train service headed for victory**

By GUY KOVNER  
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT



A sales tax for the proposed Sonoma-Marin commuter train was headed for approval early today, apparently reversing its defeat at the polls two years ago.

Diesel-powered trains will be rolling along the 70-mile line from Cloverdale to Larkspur in five years if the results hold up, said Cynthia Murray of Petaluma, co-chairwoman of North Bay Transportation Alliance, the Yes on Q campaign organization.

"We're thinking we won it," Murray said, adding that the residents of both counties "decided they wanted to invest in our transportation future."

The tax held a winning margin, 69 percent to 31 percent, in both counties with more than about 98 percent of the votes counted in Sonoma and all of the Marin precincts counted.

Measure Q, the quarter-cent sales tax for the Sonoma-Marine Area Rail Transit project, known as SMART, needed two-thirds of the combined two-county vote to be approved.

Mike Arnold of Novato, an anti-tax leader, called Murray to concede defeat late Tuesday.

"I congratulated her on a hard-fought battle," Arnold said, acknowledging that the sales tax appeared to win approval in the midst of a recession, a condition that would typically blunt the chances of a new tax.

"We think that's largely a function of the higher turnout," said Arnold, a leader of North Bay Citizens for Effective Transportation.

The tax would help pay for the train by raising an estimated \$890 million over 20 years.

The train would cost \$450 million, with an additional \$90 million bicycle/pedestrian pathway connecting the 14 rail stations.

Advocates said the train would establish an alternative to driving on congested Highway 101; critics said it was too little bang for the buck.

"I think it's just the way to go," said Jay Fuselier of Santa Rosa, who voted for Measure Q. Fuselier said he wants "to get away from burning gasoline and oil."

Fuselier said he also voted for Proposition 1, the proposed high-speed train from San Francisco to Los Angeles, saying it would be a treat to connect to it from SMART via the Larkspur ferry.

"It opens up possibilities," he said. "Let's go down to L.A. for the weekend."

"I think it's a great idea," said Dennis Hegwood of Santa Rosa, who voted for the tax two years ago and on Tuesday.

Andrew Bullene of Santa Rosa said he voted for the train tax enthusiastically, but worried that Marin voters would again defeat the train, "shattering our hopes and dreams, just like they did in the 1950s with BART."

In 2006, 70 percent of Sonoma voters said "yes" to the rail tax, but it fell short with only 57.5 percent approval in Marin. This time, Sonoma voters gave it 73 percent approval; Marin 63 percent.

SMART says the trains will take 5,300 car trips off the freeway and eliminate 124,000 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions per day.

The opposition contends SMART won't have much impact on freeway congestion or global warming.

Critics say the train will be growth-inducing, but supporters say it will spur the local economy of the North Bay.

## Heartland Trailways expands; adds new J4500 models to its fleet of MCIs

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — November 4, 2008** — After six consecutive years of record growth, it's only fitting that Heartland Trailways is marking its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary by expanding. The St. Joseph, Missouri, tour and charter company recently completed an addition to its headquarter offices; moved its Topeka, Kansas, branch to a larger location; and added four new MCI models to its fleet this year. Two of the newest are jet-black MCI® J4500s with several interior and electronic upgrades to appeal to an emerging executive customer base.



"When we took delivery of the first jet-black J4500, we showed it to customers and it really opened doors for us, so we ordered another right away," said Chuck Hill, founder and president of Heartland. "We have a growing base of executive clients and the jet-black Js appeal to them."

Heartland's two newest J4500s, the last of which was delivered in September, feature burgundy leather seats by Amaya, cup holders, coat hooks, LED reading lights and a Blaupunkt entertainment system including six, 15-inch flat-screen monitors. Satellite television and radio provide additional entertainment options, while WiFi



connectivity and 110-volt outlets throughout the cabin let passengers recharge electronic devices and stay connected. Powered by clean-engine technology from Cummins for lower emissions as mandated by the EPA paired with ZF Astronic transmissions, Heartland's new coaches are better for the environment. All of Heartland's coaches feature the Smartwave Tire pressure monitoring systems and GPS.

Despite the economic slow-down, Heartland anticipates greater expansion. "Right now we're at an 11 percent growth rate for the year so far, and October was the best month we've had in 20 years," said Hill. On average, the company has grown by 18 percent per year over the past six years. Hill points to employees instilled with a service attitude and an MCI fleet as factors in the company's success.

"I am a firm believer in affiliating with one manufacturer," said Hill. "Heartland wouldn't be where it is today if it wasn't for MCI. They make a great coach and MCI stands behind the product; oftentimes, that means even more. No matter what, you can count on MCI."

Heartland was founded in 1988 by Hill, a tire company executive who turned his expertise and RV hobby into a successful business venture. Starting out in Maryville, Missouri with a pre-owned coach, Heartland grew quickly, moving its operations to St. Joseph, Missouri, to better serve Kansas City and the surrounding area. Today, Heartland operates a fleet of 22 MCI coaches, providing transportation to a broad range of customers from church and college athletic groups to corporate executives. Heartland has ranked as one of the top 100 fastest-growing companies in the Kansas City area on Ingram's Corporate 100 Report for two consecutive years.

Heartland became a Trailways member in 2006. Hill noted that Trailways marketing assistance and brand recognition has brought them additional business opportunities.

"We do take advantage of the programs offered by other industry organizations including UMA and National Interstate (an insurance group)."

"When I started, I thought 12 to 18 vehicles would be good, today we have a total fleet of 27 units," said Hill who is also considering opening another branch office.

To learn more visit: [www.heartlandcoach.com](http://www.heartlandcoach.com)

## Carefree Bus Tours contemplates 40, adds an MCI® D4505

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — September 29, 2008** — After racing cars and seeing promise in group transportation, Paul Lenoir founded Carefree Bus Tours in 1969 with one school bus, followed by an MCI motor coach. Lenoir said he called the company Carefree because "it

described me and my lifestyle." Nearly 40 years later, the name still reflects the founder's cheerful attitude, the passenger experience and the dependability of the company's motor coaches — all MCIs.

"The MCI coaches are the best in world," said Lenoir, who has tried out competitor models. "I wouldn't have anything else. MCI did a smart thing with the curved entryway on the J4500. The model appeals to our passengers. They like the sleek design. MCI made the front on the D coach beautiful-looking, too."



Operating a fleet of 14 MCI coaches, including five J4500 and E4500s and nine D-Series models, Carefree recently added a clean-diesel D4505 after a demo trial. "It's a workhorse. We've been getting good mileage and like that we can promote a greener coach," said Lenoir. Carefree's new coach is equipped with a Detroit Diesel engine, an Allison Transmission, a state-of-the-art entertainment system with six flat-screen video monitors and Amaya seats.

Carefree, based in Clifton, New Jersey, operates two daily scheduled-service routes into Manhattan during the week and scheduled service to Atlantic City, along with tour and charter services to destinations throughout the U.S. and Canada. Carefree also provides minibus transportation for special-education programs in the area.

Safety and passenger care take priority. A volunteer medic, Lenoir installed defibrillators on several coaches, and two-thirds of his drivers are trained in CPR. "A defibrillator is 80 percent effective in saving a life," said Lenoir, who has won an award from the American Heart Association. "The defibrillators bring peace of mind. You've got to be prepared."

Carefree's management team includes Lenoir's wife, Marge; oldest son and maintenance supervisor Paul Jr.; and youngest son Matt, responsible for the office and dispatch along with assistant Chantel. Carefree employs 31 drivers, and there is a long list of driver applicants. "We have a reputation for treating our drivers well. Some



have been with us for more than 25 years," said Lenoir. Carefree operates a full-service maintenance shop that's qualified for inspection work. The company is a member of the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association.

Lenoir's interest in car racing hasn't waned in 40 years, either. Carefree owns a modified stockcar, driven by Billy Pauch, Jr. Underscoring the "Care" part of its name; the company also has charitable instincts. Lenoir likes to regularly surprise groups with donations, as evidenced by his latest gift to a local community group — 56 tickets and motor coach transportation to a Radio City holiday performance.

For more information on Carefree, visit its website at [www.carefreebus.com](http://www.carefreebus.com).

## **Charter Bus Lines adds Van Hool C2045 and GCA 3035RE coaches to fleet.**

ABC Companies recently delivered to Charter Bus Lines of British Columbia four 2008 Van Hool C2045 coaches as well as four new ABC-branded 3035RE 35' coaches.



Account Executive John McFarlane pointed out, "All of us at ABC are excited this opportunity to serve 'Charter Bus'. This is one of the West Coast's most respected coach operators, and offers top shelf service, along with having some of the best maintenance in North America."

Charter Bus Lines of BC is approaching its 60th year of operation, and is situated in Delta BC Canada, near Vancouver. It is currently owned by the second generation of the Eggen Family. Operating over 100 coaches, they provide local transfers, airport shuttle, specialized sporting event packages, as well as their signature high quality charter service.

"You can tell how much Sheldon and Wayne Eggen value their customers by the way they specify their buses," McFarlane said. The 45 footers have Van Hool's exclusive enhanced parcel racks with six 23" video monitors. The mid-sized coaches seat 32 passengers, offering superior leg room, and are equipped with

galleys. The 3035RE's also have Canadian Winter packages which include dual pane windows. All eight have multi-monitor DVD systems, Hi-Fi Audio and CD Players and full fabric interiors.

The Eggens chose Amaya Brasil passenger seats for all eight coaches and had Amaya modify the seats to Charter Bus's specifications. "The deeper, wider cushions offer unique comfort, and this is, literally, where we meet most of our customers. The curb appeal of the new coaches is great, but we want the experience to be good from beginning to end," said Sheldon Eggen. "ABC and John McFarlane really paid attention and listened to our needs. They made it clear they valued us, and we're delighted with the product and support."

## **VANDALIA ADDS 2008 VAN HOOL C2045E**

Vandalia Bus Lines of Caseyville, IL, recently took delivery of a 2008 Van Hool C2045E from ABC Companies. This is their second new coach this year, and is powered by a Cummins ISM450 engine coupled to an Allison B500 Gen IV transmission. In addition to multi-monitor DVD systems, Hi-Fi Audio and CD Players, full fabric interiors, and reclining Amaya Torino seats with foot rests, Vandalia selected Van Hool's rear window option.

Managed by brothers Dale and Dennis Streif, the family owned business recently celebrated 75 years of service to the St Louis metropolitan area. Vandalia operates 55 coaches and 13 mini's in a multifaceted operation that offers charters and tours to most of the US.



ABC Account Executive Randy Angell points out, "What makes Vandalia unique in the business is the fact that they are really a diversified company. From casino lines to major league teams, military runs, school activities, in house tours and airport service, Vandalia does it all. Dale and Dennis seem to have complementary talents that have helped the company grow and thrive. Their fleet is well maintained and immaculate. They have a disciplined approach to buying buses each year, so their fleet is one of the most modern in the region - a



demonstration of the Streif's commitment to taking care of their customers. ABC is proud to be part of their success".

Members of IMG and Gray Line, Vandalia Bus Lines are also proud to be part of The Greenest Transportation Choice by using biodiesel in all their motorcoaches.

Dale Streif pointed out "Our ABC Account Executive Randy Angell is one of the most personable and aggressive sales people we have had the pleasure to work with and not a bad sportsman. It seems that Angell is multitalented, good at buses, but great at finding fish. Dennis remarked, The Van Hool coach does a fine job and ABC takes great care of us. Randy is a pleasure to work with. Somehow he always exceeds our expectations. Energetic and competitive, he follows through with all his commitments".

### **Wilson Bus Lines opts for a smooth-ride with 2 new Prevost X3-45**

**Sainte-Claire, Quebec, November 5, 2008**—Wilson Bus Lines of Templeton, Massachusetts, took delivery of two 2009 Prevost motorcoaches during the summer of 2008. The brand new X3-45 models bring the company's fleet to nearly 30 vehicles, the majority of them Prevosts.

Wilson Bus Lines is a fourth-generation family-owned company in operation for over 75 years. Headquartered 60 miles from Boston, Wilson provides charter service and transportation for day-trip or extended tours throughout New England and the northeast U.S.



**Wilson Bus Lines of Templeton, Massachusetts, took delivery of two 2009 Prevost motorcoaches.**

Peter Wilson, company president, took time to speak about the new additions to his fleet. "These are the first two production Volvo powered models built by Prevost," he noted, "and they have already racked up some 16,000 miles. They're running very well, and we're pleased to be getting good fuel mileage that keeps improving as we go." He added that by choosing X3-45 model coaches, with their lower profile, Wilson Bus built greater flexibility into its fleet—the new coaches will be valuable on "trips that have low clearance levels—like airports, for instance." The company is also impressed

with the Prevost independent front suspension, which Mr. Wilson noted makes for a "really smooth ride" and "adds to the maneuverability" that his passengers—and drivers—appreciate.

Wilson Bus Lines bought its first Prevosts in 1999, attracted by their distinctive styling and the amount of stainless steel in the H series frames. They are steadfast fans, especially of Prevost service, which Peter Wilson describes as "superb." He also appreciates the fact that because Prevost is owned by Volvo, service and warranty issues are streamlined, unlike other vehicles that require dealing with a second party engine manufacture.

And, he added, with the fall foliage season about to reach its peak in New England, the two new Prevosts should see plenty of use.

### **Spirit Coach stays 100% Prevost with three new H3-45s**

**Sainte-Claire, Quebec, September 22nd, 2008**—Spirit Coach, a leading provider of luxury motorcoach transportation in Alabama's Tennessee Valley, recently purchased three Prevost H3-45 motorcoaches.



**Spirit Coach owners (from left), Jo Lynn Anderson, Clip Coates, and Angela Coates pose in front of one of their new H3-45's.**

The new acquisitions, which all have Volvo D13 engines, are the first coaches in Alabama to be so equipped; one of them is also outfitted with wheelchair lift equipment. They bring Spirit's 100%-Prevost fleet to 14, all H3-45s.

Robert "Clip" Coates, Jr., President and General Manager of Spirit Coach, has been a Prevost customer since he founded his northern Alabama company in 2000. Spirit provides charter and luxury motorcoach service for tour operators and sports teams throughout the southeast U.S., transporting travelers "anywhere they need to go."



The company originally specified Prevost vehicles because they felt they were "the best piece of equipment on the market," Mr. Coates said. That sentiment hasn't changed over the years, as the Spirit Prevosts continued to rack up miles. It has also helped the company develop an excellent working relationship with its Prevost sales representative, Bill Leonard, as well as the staff of Prevost's Tennessee service and parts facility, where Spirit coaches are serviced.

These solid working relationships proved invaluable earlier this year when Spirit first began to consider ordering D13 engines for its newest purchases. "The 'green aspect' of the D13 was important to us," Clip Coates explains. Knowing Prevost as well as they do, Spirit Coach managers were confident that all the preparatory work for the D13 introduction—such as training and maintenance—would be thoroughly planned in advance. And they were right. "As many questions as we had for Bill Leonard," Mr. Coates recalls, "He was always able to respond or get right back to us with answers."

## **Council delays resolution on Purple Line proposal**

**Members supportive of light-rail option but say recommendation should include specifics**

Council Notes | Jeremy Arias

The Takoma Park City Council delayed making a final decision regarding the city's stance on the Purple Line concept plan in Monday night's meeting, despite a looming deadline and a recommendation from Deputy City Manager Suzanne Ludlow to support a light-rail system.

While the council agreed it was important to support a light-rail transit line over a bus system, the resolution presented by Ludlow was too focused on specifics, council members said. The council will put together more "general principles" to present to the Maryland Transit Administration by the Jan. 14 deadline.

Six alternatives are being considered by the MTA for the Purple Line, a 16-mile, east-west transit line between Montgomery and Prince George's counties that would incorporate Metro and MARC lines.

Three of the proposed alternatives would use bus rapid transit (BRT) and three would use light-rail transit (LRT), which would have higher ridership and a better economic impact, according to an MTA study released in October. Each mode of transit has three different plans under consideration which vary in cost, travel time and integration with existing roadways.

Councilman Doug Barry (Ward 6) cited concerns raised by Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority Executive Director Erwin Mack regarding pedestrian safety for people crossing University Boulevard and

parking shortages not addressed in current plans for a Purple Line transit center, which would be located at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads.

"[I would advise that] rather than to get into the specific recommendations, we look instead at articulating some principles," Barry said. "The first principle it seems to me is pedestrian safety, the second principle is enhancing the commercial district and the third principle is making sure that everybody is talking to each other."

Ludlow urged the council to draft the resolution, which supported among other things a light-rail line, the widening of sidewalks along University Boulevard and a series of successive right turns that would create a cloverleaf intersection around the transit centers at the Crossroads and at a transit center proposed for Riggs Road and University Boulevard to alleviate traffic congestion.

Ludlow advocated saving general principles for future hearings such as the Nov. 22 public forum at Montgomery College where Mayor Bruce Williams is scheduled to speak.

"Our comments at this point are important and have weight," she said. "I do think that something more specific than general principles would be helpful [to planners]."

Williams reminded the council that by refusing to approve the resolution Monday night, the council would need to approve any revisions and principles by next week to meet the deadline for submission to the MTA. Safe Takoma gets remainder of grant money  
The council also agreed to give Safe Takoma Inc. the remaining \$14,000 of a \$30,000 grant the city awarded to the organization last May as part of a matching grant partnership with Washington, D.C.

Safe Takoma President Seth Grimes and the board reviewed the group's projects, including several programs aimed at steering young people away from crimes and community engagement initiatives such as the National Night Out, where safety whistles were handed out to residents and potential volunteers were signed up for future projects.

Councilwoman Colleen Clay (Ward 2) said she was concerned that the group was branching out into areas not originally discussed when initial funds were granted by the council. But the council's main concern centered around Safe Takoma's future funding not being reliant on the city's budget.

"You can't start soon enough," Councilman Josh Wright (Ward 1) said of the need for the group to ensure outside funding and become self-sufficient.

Councilman Terry Seamens (Ward 4) also cautioned that funds would not be so easy to come by from the city in the future.



"I would certainly entertain additional proposals," he said. "I would just say the level of expectation would probably be a higher hurdle [in the future]."

Williams and the council also expressed concern that Safe Takoma planned to apply for some of the same state grants that the Collaboration Supervision and Focused Enforcement group, or C-SAFE, was targeting. Clay reminded Grimes that Safe Takoma had made assurances such a competition would not be a problem.

Grimes and the group assured the council that they would be working through their liaison, Police Chief Ronald Ricucci, to get in touch with C-SAFE, another state-funded crime prevention group that operates in and around the city, so that the two groups could cooperate on funds and in efforts to address crime issues.

## **RTD deal gives FasTracks a push**

### **Agency to acquire Union Pacific land for three corridors**

By Kevin Flynn, Rocky Mountain News (Contact)  
Published November 7, 2008 at 12:22 a.m.

RTD has reached a \$185 million agreement with the Union Pacific Railroad to acquire all of the property the transit agency will need from UP to build parts of three FasTracks corridors.

The agreement comes in place of failed negotiations earlier this year in which RTD sought more UP property but balked at the \$700 million asking price. The new deal involves less land and relocation of railroad facilities. The deal is subject to final legal negotiations and approval by boards of both entities.

Cal Marsella, RTD general manager, said it's premature to determine whether the agency came out on the plus side until later, when it pays for additional private and city land in place of the UP property it couldn't acquire. "It's hard to say if there will be savings, but we think this was a fairly negotiated deal and that we've arrived at an acceptable figure," Marsella said. "This is a real milestone for moving forward with the program."

Dennis Duffy, UP's executive vice president for operations, said the deal allowed RTD "to move forward with FasTracks and also enabled us to continue to serve our customers and maintain capacity for future growth." Managers of the \$7.9 billion FasTracks program have struggled with cost and financing issues. FasTracks has about \$2.3 billion in project costs it can't meet through 2017.

As a result, the agency is trying to determine whether to cut parts of the program, delay it or seek a second tax hike to finish it by 2017.

RTD will pay UP \$185 million to buy parcels along the East Corridor to Denver International Airport, the North Metro Corridor to Commerce City and Thornton, plus a small piece for the Gold Line to Arvada and Wheat Ridge.

RTD will own the property outright, but UP will maintain operating rights within the first mile of Denver Union Station and for the first eight miles of the North Metro Corridor, on which it still serves a freight customer once a week. That train will run at night when RTD trains won't operate.

In addition, RTD agreed to spend \$25 million moving UP tracks, including relocation of the entry into the Burnham Yard along Osage Street south of 13th Avenue. That makes way for the West Corridor light rail to Lakewood and Golden.

RTD will move UP's main line parallel to Smith Road to the north and construct its own double tracks along the south side for the train to the airport. That is the path of the original Kansas Pacific line that connected Denver to Kansas City in 1870.

flynnk@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5247

## **RTD offers options for FasTracks build-out**

By Kevin Flynn, Rocky Mountain News (Contact)  
Published November 12, 2008 at 12:05 a.m.

RTD presented a series of options Tuesday for sharing FasTracks funds among the seven corridors that can't be completed under its current budget.

None of the options gets close to providing the comprehensive regional rapid-transit network FasTracks promised. And they provide even less on some corridors that have higher ridership projections than RTD's earlier shot at allocating the funds.

Representatives of some cities and counties along the corridors, including Denver, Aurora, Commerce City and Adams County, left the presentation without reacting to the options. Bob Kochevar, Denver's liaison to FasTracks, said people need time to analyze the information.

RTD expects to decide by March how to proceed with the overbudget FasTracks program. It is \$2.1 billion short on delivering the full program voters were promised by 2017. Under current forecasts, it can fund only \$5.8 billion of the estimated \$7.9 billion cost of completion in 2017.

RTD General Manager Cal Marsella said that with recent drops in the cost of construction items such as copper and steel, the \$7.9 billion estimate could drop, but the economy still is cutting into RTD's revenues. Options include cutting back the program, extending it up to 17 more years or seeking a second sales-tax hike from voters.

RTD wants to build three corridors completely because they qualify for federal funding. Doing that plus other basic work would cost \$4.5 billion, leaving RTD with



about \$1.3 billion for the other seven corridors, whose combined costs are estimated at \$3.6 billion.

On Tuesday, Bill Van Meter, RTD's senior manager for systems planning, showed how much of the seven at-risk corridors could be built under differing assumptions of how to equitably share the \$1.3 billion.

Under all of them, the I-225 light rail and North Metro commuter rail lines fare much worse than RTD's original plan to build each remaining line to a point that makes operational sense.

## Barkat favors buses to light train

Nov 13, 2008 22:00

By ETGAR LEFKOVITS ISRAEL.JPOST.COM

A day after his election victory, Jerusalem Mayor-elect Nir Barkat pledged to tackle one of the most controversial city infrastructure projects - the repeatedly delayed light rail system.

However, it was unclear Thursday whether he would be able to dramatically change or stop the billion-dollar, government-approved project.

Barkat, who has been a long-time opponent of the project, said that he would "examine better alternatives" to the light rail system, including the use of environment-friendly buses. He added that he would immediately seek a fundamental discussion with government officials to find the most fitting solution beyond speeding up the infrastructure work on project.



Light rail construction work on Jerusalem's Jaffa Street.  
Photo: Ariel Jerozolimski

"Even when it is completed, there are better solutions than this megalomaniac idea," he said. He said he would closely examine the project's feasibility, and would consider cheaper, more effective alternatives, if such were found.

"It could be that there are cheaper and faster solutions to be found that will better utilize taxpayer dollars," Barkat said, adding that that new bus lines with state-of-the-art

environmental technology could be a solution at a fraction of the price.

However, Barkat's comments drew criticism from officials involved in the project.

"We have reached the point of no return. The mayor will not be able to stop the project," an official said.

After years of delays and derailments, the light rail is now scheduled to begin operating in September 2010. Last year, officials confirmed that the project - which should have been up and running by this year - had stalled due to a lack of manpower and first-time construction problems, including incorrectly installed tracking on the line near the Mount Herzl military cemetery. That tracking has since been ripped out and redone.

A spokesman for the light rail project on Thursday downplayed Barkat's criticism.

"We have no doubt that the mayor will be convinced of the benefits of the project," said Shmuel Elgrably. In a recent report, State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss found that the government had incorrectly estimated the public sector's investment in the project, which soared from NIS 500 million in 2000 to NIS 1.3 billion by the end of 2007 - 160% beyond projections. When it finally gets moving, the project is meant to ease traffic congestion, improve access to the city center and reduce air pollution. But in the meantime, it has created a traffic nightmare for Jerusalem motorists and turned many parts of the city into big dusty, inaccessible construction sites.

The inaugural line, the nearly 14-kilometer "red line," will run from the northern Jerusalem neighborhood of Pisgat Ze'ev to Mount Herzl via the city center, with 23 stops along the way.

As mayor, Barkat could nix the additional lines planned in the project and use his office to speed up the notoriously slow pace of the infrastructure work, something current Mayor Uri Lupolianski failed to do. Two months ago, the municipality finally acknowledged severe disruptions and postponements in the construction, and faulted the international conglomerate carrying out the work.

The admissions, outlined in a letter to the Finance Ministry, cited a lack of an updated stage-by-stage working plan, limited working hours, and insufficient manpower and construction equipment.

The condemnation of the delays, just two months before the mayoral elections, followed a boisterous City Hall protest by local merchants who said the infrastructure work on Jaffa Road was ruining their businesses. For its part, the City-Pass conglomerate placed the blame right back on the Jerusalem Municipality, saying



the city had failed to issue building permits for many months, thereby delaying the work.

As city opposition leader, Barkat had called to establish an independent commission of inquiry into the delays in the project, but his proposal was never taken up by city or state officials.

November 14, 2008

## **Amtrak Statement**

WASHINGTON - The National Railroad Passenger Corporation today announced the resignation of its President and CEO, Alex Kummant.

"On behalf of the entire Board, I'd like to thank Alex for his leadership over the past two years," said Donna McLean, Chair of the Board. "During the past two years, the company experienced exciting economic times, strong ridership and revenue growth, solid profit and loss performance, and the advancement of the Amtrak brand overall. He also successfully oversaw the completion of labor agreements with all of the unions representing Amtrak's employees. We are grateful to Alex for his contributions to the company. We wish him well in his future endeavors."

Alex Kummant reflected that he was "proud of what the management team at Amtrak had accomplished over the last two plus years and that [he believed] Amtrak had a strong operational and financial base to get through the coming turbulent times." He continued that he "would help in any way to make this a smooth transition."

"I'd like to thank Alex for his commitment to Amtrak over the past two years," said Hunter Biden, Vice Chair of the Board. "Our Board is committed to keeping Amtrak on an aggressive path of performance improvement. Current economic conditions highlight the need for us to continue finding ways to drive quality and customer service across the system. We are moving forward with the development of an aggressive long-term plan for the company, based on the recent legislation passed by Congress."

After record ridership and revenue in FY08, a downturn in the economy and new legislative requirements presents challenges as well as opportunities. In the coming years, Amtrak will need leadership to maximize its potential and utility to the traveling public, while increasing the efficiency of the whole operation. The Board is confident that this transition will be seamless, with William Crosbie, Amtrak's Chief Operating Officer, as Acting President and CEO for an interim period.

## **Light Rail Stretch Closes**

## **Repairs interrupt service between North Avenue, Hunt Valley**

By a Baltimore Sun reporter  
November 16, 2008

Light rail service has been discontinued indefinitely between the North Avenue and Hunt Valley stations because a large number of trains are out of service for wheel maintenance, the Maryland Transit Administration has announced.

The disruption in service began yesterday.

The Penn Station-Camden Station shuttle trains also will not be in service, the MTA announced Friday. Bus service will be provided between the discontinued stops.

Single-car trains will serve commuters south of North Avenue, which could lead to crowding at the beginning of the week. MTA officials have recommended that riders add 45 minutes to travel time during this period.

According to reports from WJZ, the transit agency said that "flat spots" on many of the trains' wheels could lead to broken wheels if left unrepaired.

Flat spots are created when the train's wheels slide on the track, which can be caused by the system's automatic emergency braking system. The sliding problem has been exacerbated by "slippery rail season": When leaves fall on the tracks, they decompose and form a film that can cause the trains' wheels to slip. Snow and rain also add to the problem.

"When you start seeing wheels cracking and you start seeing wheels start to disintegrate, you have to look and say, 'Listen, these were all made around the same time,' and so after we closely inspected it, we started to see a pattern emerging of problems," MTA spokeswoman Jawauna Greene told WJZ.

The MTA has enacted stricter rules since April, when a train wheel cracked, leading to inspections of 53 light rail cars and delays and disruptions of service. MTA inspectors found a number of flat spots on the cracked wheels. As a result, any wheel with a significant flat spot is now reground. That process takes at least 24 hours.

The MTA says it is seeking short- and long-term solutions to the problem. It is testing a new pressure-washing procedure that could increase friction between the wheels and rails. However, the agency said there is no timetable for repairs or return of service.

Last week, the MTA warned that there would be "major disruptions" in light rail service between Timonium and Hunt Valley. The transit agency predicted then that the problems would last for about a week.

## **1 year old, and Lynx is booming**



**Unexpectedly high ridership, packed parking lots and surprising usage of connector buses show the approval commuters are giving to light rail.**

By Celeste Smith  
cesmith@charlotteobserver.com  
Posted: Sunday, Nov. 16, 2008

Packed park-and-ride lots in the morning.

Rising ridership.

New trains already on order.

A year after Lynx Blue Line light rail debuted in southern Mecklenburg, weekday daily ridership on the 9.6-mile route to and from uptown Charlotte is "way beyond" expectations, according to a CATS spokeswoman.

What? You're not among the 16,000 daily riders? More enticements are coming to get you on board.

Last week, CATS officially opened new parking spaces for the Lynx stop at the I-485/South Boulevard stop near Pineville. It'll help morning commuters – many of whom face the "full" message board sign at the 1,100-plus-space deck, and then drive to other light-rail stations for spaces.

And though Matthews is several years away from a final decision on what type of rapid transit system is coming, future plans include space in the town for two light-rail transit stops.

Meanwhile, commuters like Mary Wholey are hooked.

"I call it my decompression time," said Wholey. Four days a week she drives from her southern Mecklenburg neighborhood off Rea Road to the South Boulevard stop then catches the train to her job at Bank of America. She doesn't miss her traffic-clogged driving commute, and can polish off a book a week thanks in part to her train time. "Sometimes when I have a really good book, I get close to missing my stop."

The Charlotte Area Transit System launched its \$462.7 million South Corridor line last November.

Here's a look at who's riding and who might be in the future:

**More riders, more trains.**

CATS' 16,000 average weekday rail riders is higher than the 9,100 anticipated after the first year of service, according to CATS spokeswoman Jean Leier. "We are way beyond those expectations," Leier said via email last week. October ridership averaged 16,470.

Four more rail vehicles are on order, Leier said, and should be available in two years.

**Help for early risers.**

Relief is on the way for morning commuters facing an overflowing parking deck at South Boulevard. CATS added 54 more parking spaces to the 1,120 existing ones. Signs direct commuters to new spaces south of the Texas Roadhouse Restaurant at 9530 South Blvd.

Plans are also underway to pave and stripe an additional parking lot north of the restaurant for another 85 spaces by early 2009, according to CATS.

Parking can be so iffy on weekday mornings that Tonia Kearney of Weddington gets to the South Boulevard lot no later than 6:45 a.m. to commute to her job at Wachovia.

"You're lucky if you get a spot by 8, 8:30," said Kearney, who says she rides for convenience and to save money. It's \$45 a month to ride light rail, she said, compared to more than \$100 for monthly parking.

"You're also lucky if you get a seat ... a lot of people are starting to take light rail now because of gas prices."

**Trains for Matthews?** Rapid transit won't come to Matthews before 2022, the scheduled completion of the first phase of the Independence Boulevard corridor, according to plans.

The type of transit – bus or light rail – still hasn't been decided. Although bus transit is cheaper, rail supporters like Matthews Mayor Lee Myers want light rail to boost development along the Independence corridor.

How soon transit comes depends on available federal funding, said Myers, who has leadership roles on two groups that govern regional transportation issues. (For the South Corridor line, the federal government paid half the \$462.7 million price tag, while CATS and the state each paid 25 percent.)

Myers said by email last week that President-elect Obama may be more open to light rail.

"The Obama administration may be more amenable to increasing the overall amount of funding for rapid transit projects," Myers said. "This could enhance the Independence Corridor's likelihood of receiving federal funding."

Meanwhile, Matthews' development plans include two light-rail stops – one at CPCC Levine and one near the planned regional sportsplex at the southwest quadrant of the I-485/U.S. 74 interchange.

**Commuting by bus and train**

Ridership has grown on bus routes reconfigured last year to connect to light rail stations, according to CATS. Here's how the numbers compare from December 2007, the first full month of the route changes, to October 2008:



No.24 Nations Ford, which connects to the Arrowood and Woodlawn road stations: 16,111 then, 23,794 last month.

No. 42 Carowinds, from the South Point Business Park near Carowinds to the I-485/South Boulevard stop: 412 then, 3,589 last month.

No. 43 Ballantyne, which travels to the Sharon Road West station: 3,710 then, 8,259 last month.

No. 44 Fort Mill, from Wells Fargo in Fort Mill to the Arrowood stop: 1,471 to 3,615.

No. 58 Pineville, which runs from the I-485 station to Carolina Place Mall: 12,294 to 16,318.

## Competition heats up over Fort Worth streetcar route

03:41 PM CST on Tuesday, November 18, 2008

By CHRIS HAWES / WFAA-TV

Streetcars may be back on Fort Worth streets soon. Fort Worth isn't talking about any streetcar you've seen in this area.

It would actually look a bit like light rail.

But the advantage is, it doesn't need a separate lane with track built, which makes it cheaper.

Seattle-style street cars, sleek and modern, are what are being considered for Fort Worth.

Council's expected to vote on whether to move forward next month and that's when the debate should really begin.

At issue is which neighborhood gets the streetcar first. "These opportunities only present themselves once in a lifetime, so if we do this now, in the near term future, we'll be way ahead of the curve," said South Fairmount homeowner, Fred Harper.

Harper wants to fight for his neighborhood and the southern option, which brings the line through the hospital district.

"It's a heck of an opportunity for us, we know that," he said.

Other corridor options include going west along Seventh Avenue through the cultural district, East on Rosedale and North Main Street, to the Stockyards.

The choice of where to start will make or break the streetcar's future.

The price is not cheap - up to about \$100 million per corridor.

How is the city justifying the expense?

"One of the reasons that this is an important expenditure is that it allows us to create the development that will fund future development, other infrastructure needs that we have," said Joel Burns, Fort Worth city councilmember for District 9.

"How can we not afford to do it? We are very congested," said Sal Espino, Fort Worth city councilmember for District 2.

Both council members predict Fort Worth could have a streetcar in Fort Worth within five years.

E-mail [chawes@wfaa.com](mailto:chawes@wfaa.com).

## St. Louis bids farewell to its 'Am-shack'

By BETSY TAYLOR - Associated Press Writer

ST. LOUIS — St. Louis residents for years have gotten on the train from a no-frills building known locally as the "Am-shack."

Not anymore. After about two decades of planning and work, state and city officials opened a new, \$28 million transportation hub downtown on Friday where commuters can catch the bus, light rail and Amtrak trains.

The new Gateway Transportation Center is a building where Amtrak, Greyhound, MetroLink and MetroBus converge. The new facility one block south of the Scottrade Center features 24-hour operations staff, security and food service.

St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay called the opening both "a joy and a relief."

Slay said he has gotten letters, e-mails and hears often from residents about the spot where they used to board and disembark from trains.

"People wanted to know when the 'Am-shack,' or temporary facility, would be replaced. I can tell you the answer is right now," he said.

The new center will be a major crossing point. Last year, there were more than 270,000 Amtrak passengers in St. Louis. And Greyhound offers 35 daily trips to destinations across the country from the center.

A Greyhound passenger, David Dice, 33, of Edina, waited at the new transportation center to catch a bus on his trip from Tulsa, Okla., to Indianapolis. He called it a much nicer and safer-feeling environment than the bus station where he usually waited in St. Louis. "You never really wanted to hang out at that Greyhound station," he said.

"As a rule, you generally have to stay with your luggage. There, they didn't have to tell you that," he said.



He liked the new surroundings, but wondered why a soda from the vending machine cost him \$2, which he thought was too steep. Other members of the public at an opening ceremony wondered if more parking was on the way.

St. Louis Comptroller Darlene Green said officials want to add more parking, including overnight parking, which is currently not an option on site for the public.

"It's being worked on as we speak," she said.

She also said more signs are on the way to help drivers find the entrance and negotiate one-way roads into the center.

She said the transportation hub had been in the works for more than 20 years. Several speakers said they believe it will help the region's development.

"Now you can say all roads, all points, lead to the Gateway Transportation Center," she said.

## **Transit 'smart' cards wait on county**

**Port Authority picks automated fare system, but needs \$1.1M more**

Thursday, November 20, 2008  
By Joe Grata, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Port Authority has selected a company to replace its old fare boxes with a new automated fare collection system using "smart cards" with embedded electronic chips.

Administrators yesterday recommended awarding a contract for a maximum of \$33 million to Scheidt & Bachmann USA Inc., which has been involved internationally with cutting-edge transportation technology for 25 years.

But there's one big hitch.

While federal and state money are lined up, the authority needs a \$1.1 million commitment from Allegheny County as its 3.33 percent share of matching funds, and so far the county isn't willing to commit.

The Port Authority last month asked Allegheny County for \$9.9 million to leverage more state and federal funds for capital improvements, but County Executive Dan Onorato said the agency will get \$6.3 million "and not one penny more" next year.

"It's not that the county opposes the new fare collection system," authority Chief Executive Officer Steve Bland said, but it has numerous obligations of its own and only so much to dole out.

If the county gives only \$6.3 million to the authority for its capital budget, the money quickly will be gobbled up by previous debt obligations and projects already under

way, including the \$435 million Light Rail Transit system extension to the North Shore and new buses.

"A lot can happen between now and January," when Scheidt & Bachmann can withdraw its offer, Mr. Bland said. "We'll have to sort things out."

If the authority can somehow provide the \$1.1 million local share over a two-year period, officials said, installation of 1,100 fare boxes could begin on buses and trolleys by August and the system could be operational by January 2010.

"It's an important project to us," said Claudia Allen, the authority's longtime finance director, ticking off a list of improvements to be compared with today's fare collection system that is antiquated by industry standards.

Benefits include increasing revenue resulting from reduced evasion and fraud and better fare accuracy while lowering expenses through simplifying operator duties, improving passenger flow, requiring fewer "money room" personnel and eliminating abuses with student ID cards.

The contract has been structured with Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission input so that nine regional carriers including the Beaver, Butler and Westmoreland county transit authorities could "buy in" and offer their riders the same system.

Scheidt & Bachmann would provide 30 ticket vending machines, 4 million limited-use smart cards, 400,000 permanent smart cards, data transfer, and related equipment, employee training and a two-year warranty.

Authority officials and staff have spent more than two years planning, developing and deciding upon a vendor for a changeover to the automated fare collection system.

Scheidt & Bachmann finished first among three companies evaluated by a special panel that included the SPC and representatives of the regional carriers.

Joe Grata can be reached at [jgrata@post-gazette.com](mailto:jgrata@post-gazette.com) or 412-263-1985.

## **Rockford City Buses Will Run the Rest of the Year**

**ROCKFORD** - Despite a delay in state funding, Rockford Mass Transit says its buses will be able to run uninterrupted through December.

State funding totaling nearly \$4 million has been delayed by more than five months. RMTD relies on that funding to keep the buses rolling. If RMTD does not get the money by January 2009, they will have to start reducing services and possibly cease operations completely.



"To think that public transportation could shut down is frightening for our riders and our community as a whole," said RMTD Board Chairman Gary Marzorati.

RMTD says it is working on a reduction plan right now, but it's too early to know how service will be affected. "There are a lot of variables that could play out between now and then," said RMTD Executive Director Rick McVinnie.

Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey suggests angry riders write letters or make phone calls to Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich's office or to other key lawmakers in Springfield.

RMTD also operates the Stateline Mass Transit District which serves Rockton, Roscoe, Rockton Township and South Beloit. That service should not be affected because it is financed through other funds.

RMTD serves 1.5 million riders per year in Rockford, Loves Park and Machesney Park. It has a fleet of 64 vehicles.

## **Free shuttle service to Light Rail station for North Bergen residents on way**

by The Jersey Journal

Tuesday December 02, 2008, 10:08 AM

Starting next week, North Bergen will offer its residents free shuttle service to the Light Rail station at 51st Street and Tonnel Avenue, the township announced in a press release.

Mayor Nicholas J. Sacco will announce the pilot program at a news conference at the station tomorrow at 11:30 a.m. Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise, NJ Transit officials and Hudson County Transportation Management Association (TMA) representatives are expected to take part.

The shuttle service, with two routes and multiple pick-up times, will provide free transportation to commuters who may have difficulties accessing mass transportation, officials said in the press release. The program is scheduled to begin December 8.

The service consists of two buses with 18 seats each, and will only be available to North Bergen residents and will operate during critical peak hours, from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

## **Dallas Area Rapid Transit bus purchase stalls on fuel debate**

08:23 AM CST on Tuesday, December 2, 2008

By MICHAEL A. LINDENBERGER / The Dallas Morning News

Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert, billionaire oilman T. Boone Pickens and several DART board members have halted the transit agency's plan to buy a fleet of 537 new diesel-powered buses.

Mr. Leppert — who has no vote on the issue but has been lobbying Dallas Area Rapid Transit board members appointed by the city — said buying buses that run on diesel instead of compressed natural gas would send the wrong message about Dallas.

"As a city, we have been very conscientious in moving forward and being at the forefront of environmental issues," Mr. Leppert said.

"Look at what we've been doing with the green building standards, the use of renewable energy and the high proportion of alternative-fuel vehicles we have in the city fleet.

"This is a big issue when it comes to recruiting business here, and it's often an issue of perception."

It's unclear exactly how much more the natural-gas buses would cost, but it could be tens of millions of dollars. The dispute has derailed staff plans to have a contract for the new buses in place by the end of the year. A decision isn't expected until January or February, and some board members have suggested canceling the current procurement process and starting over.

Mr. Pickens said buying diesel-powered buses would perpetuate America's reliance on oil — something he has dedicated himself to ending.

Several leading members of DART's board, including Chairman Randall Chrisman of Carrollton, and its top executive staff members continue to argue that diesel makes better sense environmentally and fiscally.

"I am all about seeing that we make the right decision for the agency," Mr. Chrisman said. "And if the alternative-fuel buses end up costing us more as an agency, then that increase has to come from somewhere."

John Carter Danish, a DART board member from Irving, said the agency has struggled enough already to keep its commitments to build additional rail lines without going over budget to pay for trendier, nondiesel buses.

"If it costs us \$50 million more to buy these buses," he said, "that's \$50 million that's not in our financial plan."

**New rules**

The two questions at the center of the debate have been: Are natural-gas buses really better for the environment? And, if so, how much extra should DART pay to own and operate them?



To DART's staff, which has been preparing to buy the new buses for more than a year, the answer to the first question is "no," making the answer to the second one "nothing at all."

"We think the emissions are virtually the same," executive director Gary Thomas said. "So from a staff perspective, it's a dollar-and-cents thing."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's new emissions standards will require all bus engines to meet the same strict air-pollution rules by 2010.

Experts say diesel engines are 10 times cleaner than they were a decade ago. Nigel Clark, a professor at West Virginia University, runs a lab that studies alternative-fuel performance in transit fleets. He said natural-gas engines already meet the new standards, and manufacturers of diesel engines will, too, or they will be put out of business.

How much?

So how much difference is there in costs? That depends on whose assumptions you believe.

The DART board, meeting in closed sessions, has kept the exact costs of the natural-gas proposal under wraps. But staff members have publicly said the diesel buses would save at least \$54 million over the course of the fleet's 12-year life cycle.

When they were asked to revisit the numbers in November, the projected savings ballooned to nearly \$200 million. Critics immediately questioned those figures.

Jerry Christian, a DART board member in favor of the natural-gas option, called the staff presentation an attempt to "snowball" the board. The projected savings, he noted, soared in November because the staff used the suddenly much-lower price of diesel as a basis for future cost assumptions.

Mr. Pickens has long argued that oil prices will soar in coming years as demand outstrips available resources. He said it's a bad bet that diesel fuel will remain as cheap 10 years from now as it is today.

He said America should stop borrowing billions of dollars from China every year to pay for oil it buys from unfriendly regimes in the Middle East and Africa.

Pickens' interests

Mr. Pickens is the largest shareholder in Clean Energy, the largest provider of natural gas in North America. That firm would provide the fuel and fueling stations if DART decides to buy the natural-gas-powered buses.

Why favor natural gas? "Because it's ours," Mr. Pickens said, noting that America, and North Texas in particular, is awash in natural gas.

Mr. Pickens has met with Mr. Leppert at least four times in the last year, according to the mayor's public calendar, and Mr. Pickens and his wife donated at least \$15,000 to the mayor's 2007 campaign.

Mr. Leppert said his support for natural gas has nothing to do with Mr. Pickens and said the two have discussed the natural-gas issue for no more than "five, maybe 10 minutes" in all.

Critics have said they'd rather the fleet purchase be delayed than rushed.

Longtime transit advocate and civic leader Walter J. Humann has been running numbers of his own. He believes DART would save money with natural-gas buses, in part because his figures assume natural-gas engines can achieve better mileage than DART has estimated.

Mr. Leppert said natural-gas buses are worth paying extra for, at least to a point.

"Obviously, if it was going to cost \$200 million more [to buy the natural-gas buses], then we wouldn't be having this conversation," Mr. Leppert said.

But if it turns out that diesel is only a little cheaper, he'll still be for natural gas, he said – even if science shows its environmental impact is the same or only slightly better than diesel.

"At the level of public perception, the two fuels will never be the same," Mr. Leppert said. "That perception [of being environmentally progressive] does have real value to Dallas. We are trying as a city and region to be at the forefront of environmental issues."

Mr. Leppert would not say how much more he was willing to pay.

Some board members said buying natural gas just feels right, given the focus on a greener economy endorsed by President-elect Barack Obama.

"I have real problems supporting this plan as it is now, when the whole country seems to be moving in a greener direction," Dr. Christian said.

Dr. Clark, the professor, said the country may be better off switching to alternative fuels in the long run. But public officials also have an obligation to spend their taxpayers' money wisely.

"Someday the natural-gas market will be fully developed, and that will be a very good thing," he said. "But is it fair to ask the citizens of Dallas to pay to help develop that market? That's a question officials there are going to have to answer."