



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

## **FEBRUARY 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.

### **• FEBRUARY MEETING**

The February meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on February 6, 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 number of 16mm movies presented by Melvin Bernero and Bruce Moffat.

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.

## **Gov to transit agencies: Hike fares, I'll freeze pay**

CTA, RTA, PACE | 'How about these bureaucrats?'

November 30, 2008

**BY CHRIS FUSCO Staff Reporter/[cfusco@suntimes.com](mailto:cfusco@suntimes.com)**

Memo to Chicago area public transit executives: If you want to increase riders' fares, Gov. Blagojevich wants to freeze your salaries.

Blagojevich is crafting a plan that, if approved by the General Assembly, would force transit agencies that increase fares in 2009 or 2010 to hold the line on pay for all nonunion employees for those same years. If the boards that govern those agencies don't do that, the state would bar fare increases from taking effect.

The governor's proposal is a response to the CTA and Pace forging ahead with Jan. 1 fare increases. Blagojevich had said the agencies should be able to keep fares the same because they're getting hundreds of millions of new dollars annually through a transit-bailout law that raised sales taxes in Cook and the collar counties this year.

But transit leaders, particularly those at the CTA, say they need to increase fares because they've been hit with higher fuel and other costs -- including costs tied to the governor's free-rides-for-seniors program, which he insisted be part of the bailout.

Salaries for dozens of transit executives continued to rise in 2008 after state bailout money started to flow, records show. The Chicago Sun-Times Watchdogs column reported Monday that the number of Pace executives who make more than \$100,000 a year increased from 13 in 2006 to 20 this year.

Pace, the CTA and RTA, the umbrella agency for the Chicago area's transit agencies, plan salary increases again in 2009, officials said.

"How about these bureaucrats who sit on the Pace board who just socked it to the ratepayers by increasing fares?" Blagojevich told reporters last week. "And what do they do with the money? They give themselves pay raises. They hire more people they don't need. They take care of their friends and their cronies at the expense of people who right now are looking at us to make their lives easier, not more difficult."

Pace officials declined to comment on the governor's tirade or the legislation he's drafting, which should be introduced to lawmakers in January. RTA and CTA officials also declined to comment.

Overall, the governor's plan could affect as many as 1,700 CTA, RTA and Pace executives and support staff, many of whom get pay increases tied to performance goals. The top-paid executives at those agencies are Ron Huberman at the CTA, \$198,000; Steve Schlickman at the RTA, \$214,988, and Thomas J. Ross at Pace, \$182,149.

The governor is not targeting the salaries of union workers, whose wages are governed by collective bargaining agreements. And Metra employees would not immediately be affected by the governor's proposal because Metra raised fares this year and has no plans to do so in 2009. Metra's top-paid executive is Philip A. Pagano, who makes \$263,049 a year.



## Just charge it: CTA to offer more ways to pay with plastic

**All-in-one 'smart' credit/debit cards could be used for more than commuting** By Jon Hilkevitch | Tribune reporter

November 19, 2008

In a society addicted to buying on credit, the Chicago Transit Authority is hoping to cash in big time.

A "smart" version of those credit cards and bank debit cards stuffed in your wallet will be accepted for payment of CTA bus and train fares in about a year, transit officials told the Tribune on Tuesday.

The card, which will contain a computer chip that allows the user to pay for rides on the CTA, Pace and other participating transit systems, is otherwise a standard credit or a debit card that can be used at all other businesses where it is currently accepted.

"You tap the card against the card reader and get on the CTA. It removes the barrier of having to get our type of fare [card]," CTA President Ron Huberman said.

But the big story is the money. Bank and credit card companies have competed vigorously in Asia and other parts of the world for a piece of the transit market because the all-in-one card usually ends up being stored at the top of consumers' wallets, so it can be withdrawn easily and often for all kinds of purchases. The companies hope that the added usefulness of their cards will bring them more customers who will use the cards more frequently.

For the CTA rider, the smart cards are billed as being all about the convenience. Consumers ultimately will be able to carry one card to cover just about any expense, from lattes to laundry bills, airfares to Frankfurt and subway rides to Clark and Division Streets, proponents of the cards say.

Visa, MasterCard and all other credit card and banking companies will be invited to bid for contracts, CTA officials said.

Once the system is in place, each fare transaction will be processed in less than a second, so long lines at turnstiles or bus stops should not be a problem, officials said.

The change, which is expected to take place over a period of years, marks a step toward what some financial experts envision as a mostly cashless society. It will also free up the CTA to focus exclusively on providing transportation, while generating new income through long-term contracts with the corporations that issue and manage the cards.

The potential benefits to the consumer are limited only by the imagination of the marketing departments at the credit card firms and banks competing for a chunk of the 1.7 million daily fare transactions on the CTA, experts say. For example: Ride the bus, earn airline miles. Sign up for the Acme Express credit card and as an introductory offer customers can ride the CTA free for a week.

"A lot of merchants validate parking. They could also validate transit use by providing credits for CTA rides as a reward for shopping at their business," said George Kocur, a senior lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's civil and environmental engineering department.

MIT hosted a workshop last week attended by officials from about 10 transit agencies, including the CTA, and bank card companies.

Computer chips in the smart cards record the transactions, similar to how bank ATM cards and the separate CTA Chicago Cards work. All transactions, account-security issues and customer disputes will be handled by the company issuing the card.

Once the cards with a chip that connects them to the CTA's program are available, credit card companies and banks will automatically send the new cards to current credit-card clients and invite potential customers to apply for them, probably much in the same way that the companies already flood mailboxes with pitches for credit cards, officials said. Out-of-towners who have a credit card from one of the companies participating in the CTA's program will be able to use their card on buses and trains when they visit the Windy City.

People who have low incomes, individuals with bad credit or those who don't like credit or bank cards could continue to use traditional CTA transit cards, until they are eventually phased out, or pay cash fares on buses, CTA officials said. Cash represents less than 5 percent of CTA fare transactions.

Debit cards preloaded with value could also be purchased, along the lines of phone calling cards stocked with minutes of talk time.

The new smart card technology will open new lines of revenue to the cash-strapped CTA and allow it to eventually get out of the costly business of supplying fare cards. The CTA also will need far fewer transit card vending machines, which are expensive to buy and maintain, officials said.

"Moving away from producing our own fare media and maintaining transit card vending machines across the system will save the CTA at least \$10 million a year over time," Huberman said.



The CTA also could reap substantial royalties by offering a credit card company a half-billion transit-fare transactions a year, Huberman said. In addition to royalties, the companies would be expected to help pay for card-reading machines on buses and at rail stations, he said.

Huberman declined to provide potential revenue figures, preferring instead to see how the market responds when the CTA goes out for bids in early 2009.

In 1997, the CTA signed a \$106 million deal with the Cubic Automatic Revenue Collection Group of San Diego to install the automated fare-collection system that the CTA uses today.

The original plan was to use the Cubic system for 20 years, but it has proven too expensive to buy, operate and maintain the machinery, Huberman said.

"This is our ticket to get out of a cost-prohibitive system," he said.

Some type of cash fare-collection apparatus will remain for the small segment of riders who continue to pay with cash, officials said.

But authorities are focused on minimizing the current practice in which transit systems operate like currency exchanges by changing cash into transit cards.

"It's expensive, it's a hassle and it doesn't add any value," Kocur said.

The trend toward an all-in-one card has already emerged in Europe and Asia. In Hong Kong, for instance, the Octopus Card is used to pay public transportation fees as well as purchases at businesses. Payments are deducted almost instantly. The London public transit agency, which offers a smart card, plans to shift the responsibility for administering the card from the agency to credit card companies and banks in 2010.

"The credit card authorization takes 350 milliseconds or less," said Dennis Marshall, CTA general manager of business development, who attended the transit smart card conference at MIT along with colleagues from transit systems in London, Paris, New York City and Philadelphia.

A smart credit/debit card pilot project is being conducted on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Lexington Line subway in New York City in a partnership with MasterCard and Citibank. Salt Lake City is scheduled to launch a similar program in 2009.

The CTA plans to start soliciting bids from companies early next year.

A pilot project will then follow on CTA bus routes and selected rail stations. The suburban Pace bus agency will also be involved.

"We believe this is where the market is heading, and we don't want to be chasing it. We want to be leading it," Huberman said.

jhilkevitch@tribune.com

## CTA Launches Joint Smart Card Program with I-GO Car Sharing

1/6/2009

### Single Card Allows Rides on CTA and I-GO Car Access



The Chicago Transit Authority and I-GO Car Sharing today launched their joint smart card program – a single card that can be used to gain access to I-GO vehicles and ride the CTA. The program is part of CTA's continued commitment to promote the use of public transportation by providing additional travel options for commuters.

"Taking public transit and using car sharing programs both support the same environmental principle of limiting the number of cars on the road while providing access to everyday activities," said CTA President Ron Huberman. "We are pleased to partner with I-GO to help make traveling more convenient for those who are environmentally conscious."

"Car sharing is a natural extension of public transit, and I-GO is proud to help the CTA broaden its options," said CEO of I-GO Sharon Feigon. "Reducing transportation costs, urban congestion and greenhouse gas emissions are attainable goals everybody can agree on."



A customer signing up for a new, individual membership from I-GO will be given the option to participate in the program and link their I-GO membership to a Chicago Card Plus. Up to 5,000 individuals who register online at [www.igocars.org](http://www.igocars.org) and who meet each program's eligibility requirements will receive a single card that can be used to ride the CTA and unlock their reserved I-GO vehicle.

The CTA component of the Chicago Card Plus/I-GO cards will offer the same account features as a standard Chicago Card Plus. Chicago Card Plus is an electronic farecard with its balance maintained in an online account.

Currently, there are I-GO cars at nine L stops with plans to expand to more this year. Nearly every car in I-GO's fleet is within walking distance of a CTA rail or bus stop.

I-GO Car Sharing, an affiliate of the Center for Neighborhood Technology, is a Chicago-based non-profit committed to economical and environmentally sound transportation choices.

## **NEW DIGITAL ADVERTISING DISPLAYS ARE LAUNCHED AT CTA'S 47TH STREET RED LINE STATION**

1/8/2009

### **Mayor Daley Again Urges the State to Enact a Plan to Address Long-term Infrastructure Needs of the Transit System**

Mayor Richard M. Daley and Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) officials today announced the installation of the agency's first digital advertising displays along its rail system.

The 47th Street Red Line station is the first CTA station to be equipped with the digital advertising displays, which also will feature next train arrival and other service information and generate more than \$100 million in revenue over the next 10 years. Over the next 30-days, the CTA will test the eight displays installed at the station for durability, placement and customer feedback before moving forward with its gradual installation at the remaining 143 rail stations.

"In these difficult economic times, it is more important than ever that all public agencies continue to get the most from every tax dollar, to manage even better and to further cut spending so that more funds can be reinvested in service delivery," Daley said in a news conference held at the 47th Street Red Line station.

"An initiative such as this one is a perfect example of the kind of public-private partnership we must undertake to keep our transit system strong into the future," he said.

During the pilot test, the CTA will test the durability of the displays against graffiti, etching and various weather conditions; the ability for customers to clearly view information on display in various lighting conditions; and optimum placement of the displays.

The testing of the rail digital displays is the second pilot of the CTA's digital communications network, which launched in September with testing of a digital advertising display mounted on the curb-side of a CTA bus. CTA will begin receiving the first 50 of 100 bus signs later this month and plans to have the first half of the order installed by late spring. All 100 CTA buses are expected to be equipped with the displays by this summer.

Under the terms of the agreement, Titan Outdoor will be responsible for the design, purchase, installation, maintenance and repair of more than 1,500 digital displays installed on 100 buses and at all 144 rail stations. There is no upfront cost to the CTA.

Upon completion of installation, the digital displays at rail stations and on buses will be fully integrated with CTA's Control Center and the Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC). During an emergency, CTA will be able to override advertisements and post emergency information or real-time service updates.

"This is an exciting and significant step in our effort to provide clear, timely and easy-to-use service information to our customers who are in-transit," said CTA President Ron Huberman.

"Before entering a station or going through a turnstile, customers will know when the next three trains will be arriving. The availability of next train arrival information will allow our customers to better manage their commutes by taking out the guesswork," he said.

Mayor Daley pointed out that, in addition to creative and cost-effective programs such as the digital displays, to provide a safe and reliable system of public transportation, the CTA needs help from both the federal and state governments to meet its infrastructure needs.

To get the system to a good state of repair, the CTA needs \$6.8 billion, the mayor said.

"Congress seems to be moving toward passing an economic stimulus package this month that will create greatly-needed jobs across our state and provide money



for public transportation and to help build new schools, bridges and highways.

"Unfortunately, the state legislature hasn't provided meaningful long term capital funding for the system and we haven't received capital funds from the state in more than four years.

"Once again, I encourage Springfield to enact a long term infrastructure plan of its own – including funds to build new schools, bridges, highways, improve public transportation and community anchors," Daley said.

The mayor said Chicago has a good transit system that is getting better.

"Because public transportation is the way that more than 1.7 million people from Chicago and across the region get to and from work each day and live their lives, a modern public transportation system is essential to a good quality of life in Chicago.

"I want to congratulate the CTA and Titan for creating this partnership that represents one more step toward providing Chicago with a system of public transportation that works for our people and helps make sure that we have a robust transit system into the future," he said.

## **EP Chamber receives update on light rail project**

By Leah Shaffer

It's been a project 20-years in the making, but, the Southwest Transitway – a light rail project the cuts from Eden Prairie to downtown Minneapolis, still has a long road ahead of it.

Hennepin County Transit Project Manager Katie Walker recently gave Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce members an update on the status of the project.

The Southwest Transitway, she explained, has narrowed down its choices to three main options: Alternative 3 is the preferred route for the city of Eden Prairie, the Chamber, the Southwest Policy Advisory Committee and Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority. Alternative 3 would have its first station at Mitchell Road and Highway 5. Then the line would travel just south of the freeway to the next station – near the SouthWest Transit ramp which would allow it "to integrate with the bus service," Walker added.

The Eden Prairie Town Center would be the location of the next station and from there the line would continue along Flying Cloud Drive. The next station would be in the Golden Triangle, near the old Best Buy headquarters.

The Golden Triangle has about 50,000 employees and it's designated to grow, so having a station in this area "is very important," said Walker.

The line would continue on west side of Highway 212 and there would be a proposed station near a future United Health Group development.

The line would continue north through Opus, then it would follow Shady Oak Road onto the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority property that currently functions as a bike trail.

The second alternative that is still on the table is Alternative 1 "although it was ranked lower in the process primarily due to lower ridership numbers as well as that it was not as supportive of the economic development goals of the city," added Walker.

Alternative 1 would primarily follow the Hennepin County Rail Authority property through Eden Prairie, which is mostly a residential area.

Technically, the three routes are labeled 1A, 3A and 3C. The A and C routes indicate which way the LRT would go once it is in Minneapolis. Route A follows the Kenilworth Corridor and route C goes through Uptown.

Detailed maps of the routes are available at [www.southwesttransitway.org](http://www.southwesttransitway.org).

The project is in the process of going through its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). As part of that project, planners just finished up scoping meetings to gather public comment. Walker said they expect a draft of the DEIS (and decision on preferred alternative) by the end of 2009. That will result in a selection of a preferred route, then final design, engineering and ultimately construction, assuming it obtains federal funding. The project could be underway as early as 2015, or between 2017-2018, Walker estimated. Cost estimates range from \$865 million to \$1.4 billion depending on which route is chosen. Walker explained that the federal government pays 50 percent, 10 percent comes from state; another 10 percent comes from the Hennepin County Rail Authority and, 30 percent from new transit sales tax funds. Walker noted that the scoping process included three public hearings in October which had more than 300 people attend: "an incredible turnout for that type of meeting," she said. During Walker's presentation, held during a Chamber of Commerce General Membership Luncheon, one audience member wanted to know about getting input from businesses and why the station locations have changed. Walker noted that stations come and go in the planning process. Hennepin County is working with the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins and St. Louis Park to do station planning, she said. They are looking at station locations and potential land use around those locations." That process is currently underway," she said. About business involvement, Walker noted that there's an existing group that includes regional chambers that formed to help move the project forward.



In addition, she said they are working on forming a business advisory committee – “a group of businesses and property owners in close proximity to the line” to help inform them of issues.” We are in the process of forming that group as well.”

#### Light rail alternatives

A previous study has narrowed the field down to three routes for light rail in the southwest region.

**Route 1A** would follow the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority Property (used as a bike trail currently) through Eden Prairie into downtown Minneapolis via the Kenilworth Corridor.

**Route 3A and Route 3C:** Both these routes would cut through the Golden Triangle of Eden Prairie: Route 3A would then follow the Kenilworth Corridor through Minneapolis, while 3C would curve farther east into Uptown before turning north into downtown.

**Note:** Route 3, which goes through the Golden Triangle, is the preferred route for the city of Eden Prairie, Eden Prairie Chamber and the Southwest Transitway Policy Advisory Committee

## \$100m Port Rd tram extension won't be deferred, Rann confirms

GREG KELTON, STATE EDITOR  
November 27, 2008 11:20am

**THE Opposition says the State Government's plan to push ahead with the \$100 million tram extension to the Entertainment Centre is a reckless splurge.**

Premier Mike Rann announced this morning that the Port Rd extension would start early next year and be running in early 2010.



He declared that it was one of the projects which would not be deferred because of the global economic crisis.

The Government has already deferred construction of the planned \$775 million prisons complex at Mobilong

because of a \$400 million "black hole" in state finances caused by the crisis.

But Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said the Government was "splurging" \$100 million on a tram network without knowing whether the state could afford it.

He said this was a commitment to a project which, arguably, the state did not need and it was being announced before Treasurer Kevin Foley had even outlined the state of our finances in the wake of the global financial crisis.

He said the Government was hell-bent on opening the tram extension because it was trying to spend its way back into office for a third term.

But Mr. Rann argued that it was vitally important for local jobs that the Government continue its record investment in infrastructure.

"Cabinet has decided that there will be no deferral of this important transport project," he said.

The proposed tram extension will run 2.8km from West Tce to the entertainment complex and will include a "park and ride" facility at the centre for more than 400 vehicles.

Transport Minister Patrick Conlon said Australian firms Thiess and Downer EDI Works had won the contract to undertake further design and development work on the project.

"The tramline extension will follow a key route into the city so it is important to maintain efficient traffic flows while minimizing construction time and disruption to business owners, residents and motorists," Mr. Conlon said.

## Fort Worth unveils plan for limited streetcar system

BY MIKE LEE

[mikelee@star-telegram.com](mailto:mikelee@star-telegram.com)

**FORT WORTH** — For the first time, Fort Worth officials unveiled a plan showing how a limited streetcar system could be built, including preliminary routes and a way to pay for it.

It would still take about five years and \$250 million to build the 12-mile system, and there's a significant funding gap, according to Andy Taft, chairman of an 18-member task force that studied the idea.

But the plan is significant because it shows that a streetcar system is possible, he said.

"The committee identified within a pretty tight margin how we could possibly do it," Taft said. "It's where we take Fort Worth, Texas, to the next step."



The task force and city staff recommended hiring a consultant with transit experience to help with the project. The plan recommends starting with a limited system:

### **A loop in downtown Fort Worth**

A route along West Seventh Street to the Will Rogers Center and the University of North Texas campus  
A route down South Main Street with a spur to Evans Avenue and Rosedale Street, and a connection to the medical district along Magnolia and Eighth avenues.  
The plan has broad support among the City Council, whose members inspected similar systems in Seattle; Tacoma, Wash.; and Portland, Ore., earlier this year.

### **Being left out**

Council members Kathleen Hicks and Sal Espino, though, questioned why the original routes left out low-income neighborhoods on the north and southeast sides of town.

"That area of the city has the highest ridership of public transit," Hicks said.

Future routes would run further along East Rosedale to serve southeast Fort Worth and along North Main Street to the Stockyards.

The trains would run on existing streets and are designed to supplement buses and other forms of transit. It would be a separate system from commuter trains, such as the Trinity Railway Express, that run on existing railroad tracks and are intended to carry large numbers of people over long distances.

### **Working together**

Councilman Joel Burns said it's important that the different systems work together.

"It's got to be right outside the door. That's the way you get a nurse who lives in Bedford to ride the TRE, get the streetcar and take it to his or her job at the hospital," he said.

The biggest source of capital funding — \$89 million — would come from the existing tax increment financing districts that already pay for extra amenities. The downtown improvement district also would kick in money.

About \$97 million would come from the city, Tarrant County, gas well revenue and hotel taxes. But that level of funding would require expanding the tax districts and possibly changing state law to allow an increase in hotel taxes.

The funding gap — \$64 million — is equivalent to the cost of three miles of track, Taft said.

MIKE LEE, 817-390-7539

## **KC pays \$5M for former downtown bus terminal**

**Kansas City Business Journal**

Wednesday, December 17, 2008, 10:31am CST

Kansas City paid \$5 million to buy a longtime downtown eyesore, the former bus terminal at 11th and Holmes streets.

Assistant City Attorney Ted Anderson said Wednesday that the city and owners of the bus terminal, Barber & Sons Tobacco Co., agreed on the price Oct. 3. At the time, the city agreed not to divulge the price. But City Attorney Galen Beaufort subsequently determined that the state's sunshine laws required disclosure, Anderson said.

Interest in the bus terminal site has been keen because it is within the blighted area that Swope Community Builders is trying to clean up via a \$350 million mixed-use redevelopment plan called East Village. The terminal parcel also is part of a two-block site in the running for a proposed new federal office building that would house more than 1,000 employees of the General Services Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The city bought the bus terminal with bonds to be repaid with tax revenue generated by the East Village project, which includes a new \$60 million headquarters for JE Dunn Construction that will open next year. Of \$31.2 million in tax-increment financing approved for East Village, \$12 million was earmarked for acquiring and cleaning up blighted properties in the nine-block area.

## **LimoLiner Fighting Off Competition with Free Booze, Fresh OJ**

November 17, 2008 at 5:14 PM



It's no secret that reliable, comfortable, we-wouldn't-mind-taking-that bus service has rocked the East Coast



travel scene. BoltBus and Megabus have become major players, but old stand-by LimoLiner, which has been at the comfortable coaches with WiFi game for years, is adding some amenities this month to stay competitive.

First on the list is free red or white wine for weekday passengers on the 6 pm bus out of Boston and the 6:15 pm bus out of New York. Meanwhile early morning departures will now include a fresh squeezed OJ with breakfast. And safety-obsessed travelers might appreciate the seat belts that are being installed at every seat on the LimoLiner fleet.

Of course the biggest perk in the announcement from the company is that its advance purchase fares will continue to be \$49 each way through January 2009. While that's a couple bucks more than you'd pay on one of the other guys, the LimoLiner only seats 28, making for a cozier trip.

## ABC & Paradise Trailways Help Make a Big Impression for Women's Health

ABC Companies and Paradise Trailways have teamed up to support the Maurer Foundation for Breast Health Education with **The Pink Bus**. As part of the Maurer Foundation's mission to increase awareness and promote early detection of breast cancer, **The Pink Bus** will travel throughout the Northeastern U.S. showcasing their core message of self-examination via their "Size Matters" media campaign.



Paradise Trailways has donated the use of a new Van Hool C2145 to be used throughout the year-long campaign, and ABC designed and donated **The Pink Bus** wrap graphics. "It is great to be part of an effort that will literally drive continuous awareness to breast cancer," states Brenda Borwege, Vice President of Marketing, ABC Companies. "And, we are very grateful to share this opportunity with our great customer, Paradise Trailways, based in New York State."

**The Pink Bus** has already been a big hit, most notably having been featured on the Reuters big-screen in NYC's Times Square. Additionally, numerous media

outlets have been alerted and picked up press coverage as deployed by the Maurer Foundation. **The Pink Bus** can be reserved for media appearances and special events by visiting [www.SizeMatters.org](http://www.SizeMatters.org) or contact 516.535.5370.

## Vandalia Bus Lines took delivery of a new 3035RE

Vandalia Bus Lines, of Caseyville, IL, recently took delivery of a new 3035RE from ABC Companies. This is their third new coach this year. Randy Angell, ABC Account Executive said, "All of us at ABC Companies are proud to be partnered with a company that combines traditional excellence with innovation and growth."

Powered by a Cummins ISB 02 275 HP engine coupled to an Allison PTS 3000 Gen IV transmission, the coach is equipped with a an independent front suspension, multi-monitor DVD system, AM/FM and CD Player, full fabric interior, and reclining Amaya Patriot seats with foot rests.

Vandalia recently celebrated 75 years of service to the St Louis metropolitan area. Judy Streif is Chairman while brothers Dale and Dennis Streif provide day to day management of this 2nd generation, family owned company. They operate 69 revenue vehicles in a multifaceted company that offers charters and tours to most of the US. "Dale and Dennis 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 coaches each year, so their fleet is one of the most modern in the region - a demonstration of the Streif family's ongoing commitment to providing quality transportation", stated Angell.



Vandalia Bus Lines is a member of UMA, IMG, Grayline and the Motor Coach Council. They practice being environmentally friendly "**The Greenest Transportation Choice**" by using biodiesel in all their motor coaches.

Dennis Streif added, "We get a high demand of groups between 15 and 40 passengers. "We get these requests from businesses, colleges, schools and tour groups. The 3035RE is ideal for these groups and it allows us to be



flexible in the equipment we can offer to various size groups. Our customers are pleased with big coach quality at a reduced cost."

## COMPASS COACH TOOK DELIVERY OF A 2009 VAN HOOL T2145

Compass Coach, of Cedar Springs, MI, recently took delivery of a 2009 Van Hool T2145 from ABC Companies. The ADA lift-equipped coach was specified with ABC's new T2100 chrome package, Durabright aluminum wheels, a large monitor DVD system, Audio and CD Player, full fabric interior, and reclining Amaya Torino seats with foot rests. In addition, Compass opted for extra safety enhancements including SmarTire and an Intec backup camera.

Founded by Trenton Stange in 2000, and serving much of Michigan's Southern Peninsula, Compass has already grown to nine coaches. Stange was raised around the tour business from the age of nine. At fourteen, he knew he wanted to own a coach company, and managed to get some practice in during high school - driving friends around in a big van that had originally belonged to his father's company. In 2000 a coach company in Grand Rapids stumbled, and Stange (with his father's encouragement and a signed permission slip from his wife), moved to the area and started Compass to fill the void.



In explaining their rapid growth Stange said, "I'm not sure we do anything different than other companies. We just try to do each 'thing' a little better. I love to drive, and as a result, feel that I understand customers, drivers and destinations. We encourage our office personnel to go on trips just to make sure they understand what it's like out there. There are several fine coaches available. I feel that if a driver likes a bus he sells it to my customers and nothing drives quite like a Van Hool. We specify features that enhance our customers experience - trying to be a bit better than our competition in all the little ways that add up to a great trip."

Stange indicated, "Loyalty goes a long way with me. ABC was willing to take a chance financing a 30 year old with a little experience and a big dream. The coach was great, but my Account Executive, Pete Bachrach, was even better. Whenever we need him, or have a question, he's, literally, instantly available. ABC's 24 hour service line is terrific when I have questions."

Bachrach remarked, "Trent is a savvy businessman, even more remarkable because he's so young. He's both smart and fearless. We at ABC see a bright future for Compass because of their commitment to quality transportation built on a foundation of superb preventative maintenance."

Compass recently invested substantial resources, both money and energy, in a new facility, enabling them to serve both their customers and passing coaches. Located at 13550 White Creek Ave NE, in Cedar Springs, Mi, (near Grand Rapids) the state-of-the-art garage offers repairs, wash and lavatory service.

## Wolf's Bus Lines chooses a new Prevost H3-45 to "travel the true green"

**Sainte-Claire, Quebec, November 24, 2008**—Wolf's Bus Lines of York Springs, Pennsylvania, recently purchased a 2009 Prevost H3-45 motorcoach.

The family-owned company, which celebrated its 60th year in business in 2007, is headquartered in south central Pennsylvania not far from historic Gettysburg and the scenic Pennsylvania Dutch country. The "friendly Wolfs," as they like to call themselves, provide transportation for single and multi-day tours as well as charters that travel anywhere in the contiguous 48 states.



From Wolf's Bus Lines (left to right) Tracy Wolf, Brad Wolf, and Tammy Wolf-Baker.

The company's newest vehicle, which brings its current fleet to 17 motorcoaches, joins two earlier-model Prevosts. Brad Wolf, president, explains that over the years, the company has owned a number of Prevost vehicles. The latest purchase was motivated by the



desire to provide passengers and drivers with a safe, comfortable, and reliable ride in a deluxe motorcoach. Quite simply, Mr. Wolf observes, Prevost makes "a quality bus." And the H3 model "has lots of curb appeal," he continues. "Our drivers like driving it, and our customers who like to travel in style and comfort also appreciate its many amenities."

Many years ago, Wolf's Bus Lines chose green as its corporate color. That decision dovetails nicely with the company's current focus on "going green for the environment." As its newest Prevost—painted deep green and featuring a friendly wolf in its striking graphics—plies the roads of this bucolic part of the country, Wolf's Bus Lines is indeed continuing to "travel the true green."

## Prevost reliability scores big with County Coach

**Sainte-Claire, Quebec, November 28, 2008**—County Coach Corporation recently purchased a new Prevost X3-45 motorcoach. David Kucera, president, explained that since 2001, County Coach has purchased only Prevosts for its motorcoach fleet.

The Rye, New York-based carrier, which was established in 1955, also operates Jak Rabbit Lines, whose name reflects the initials of its founder, Joseph A. Kucera. While the senior Mr. Kucera now resides in Florida, he keeps in close contact with his three sons who serve as president, maintenance director, and general manager of the corporation, which has over 80 employees.



County Coach uses its Prevost coaches to provide service for corporate functions, religious organizations, schools, and private charter parties in the metro New York region. The Kuceras are also especially proud to serve the New York Rangers and other National Hockey League teams that visit the area. That was one motivation for buying the new X3-45, which David

Kucera describes as "a beautiful coach." Its capacity to handle 55 passengers as well as plenty of luggage and sports gear made it an obvious choice to respond to requests from discriminating customers. Prevost's renowned reliability was an equally important factor. "With professional sports teams," says David Kucera, "there just can't be any road failures." And in their years as Prevost customers, neither County Coach nor Jak Rabbit Lines have experienced any problems on the road.

The Kuceras are so sold on Prevost that in 2006, after letting their father know a new coach was in the offing, the brothers decided to instead buy two. They gave one of the new vehicles a fleet number commemorating the very first coach their dad had ever bought, many years before. Not exactly an everyday gift, but a thoughtful gesture that the team at County Coach knew would score big with their mentor.

## VENTURE TOURS ADDS DOUBLE DECKS

Venture Tours, of Virginia Beach, VA, recently took delivery of two 2009 Van Hool TD925 double deck coaches. The 81 seat coaches, the first TD925's in North America to be equipped with the Allison Gen IV automatic transmission, were picked up by Jimmy Hall at ABC Companies' Winter Garden, FL, facility.



Powered by 450 hp Cummins ISM engines, the coaches were equipped to match as closely as possible the rest of Venture's luxury fleet, with escort seats, multi-monitor DVD systems, audio and CD Players, full fabric interiors, reclining passenger seats with footrests, and electronic destination signs.

ABC Sales Manager, Claude Payne, said, "These double deck coaches say a lot about Venture's visionary approach to the coach industry. They started only 12 years ago and have built a first rate 23-coach operation." Payne added, "They were among the first to order TD925's and would have taken delivery even sooner, but they insisted on waiting for special options to be engineered – to better serve their customers."



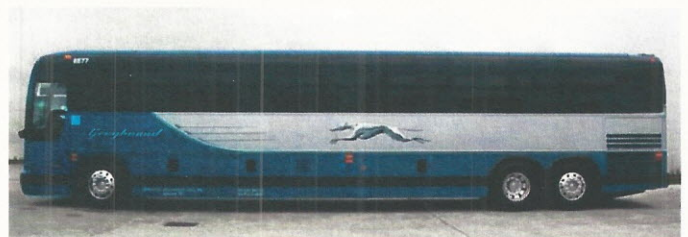
Venture was founded in 1996 by the unique Mother/Son team of Darlene Hooks and Jimmy Hall. Even more unusual is the decades of coach experience each brought to the new company. Darlene was deeply involved in the management of her family's bus line, while Jimmy began sweeping buses at 5 and worked his way up.

Venture operates a line route to the Tropicana in Atlantic City, as well as serving the Tidewater, VA, area with nationwide charter service with an array of equipment that even includes heavy duty trolley buses. "These double deck coaches have already created a stir in our market and they provide a combination of real luxury and great efficiency. The seat per mile cost is low... and what terrific seats they are," remarked Jimmy Hall. "Claude Payne has called on us for the longest time, trying to sell us coaches. For years, I told him to come back when he had a double deck... and he did. We couldn't be happier, and Claude has worked hard throughout the process from signing the order to setting up service. He and ABC are great to deal with."

## Greyhound

On some of the Yahoo bus groups, a number of photos of a new paint scheme for Greyhound have been posted.

Here they are for your pleasure and critique.







## Riders complain express buses fall short

November 24, 2008

They call them midget buses, baby buses. Maybe toy buses. The nicknames are not endearments. They're barbs some riders jab at the new Bee-Line buses being used on the BxM4C express routes from White Plains, down Central Park Avenue through Yonkers and to Manhattan. The buses are 40 feet long, similar to the ones they replace. But they sit lower to the road, making for easy entrance, but losing some seats to the wheel wells, Westchester County Transportation Commissioner Larry Salley said.

That makes all the difference for riders who now have to stand on the trips to Manhattan and back home. Alan Shatz, a Yonkers rider, says people waiting at the stops will often let a bus go and wait for the next rather than stand.

"I would like to know who signed off on this," he said. "And what were they thinking?"

The buses seat 45 people, six fewer than the buses they replaced. It's enough of a difference for people to notice, and several passengers' thoughts could be summed up by one rider, William Schultz, who talked about them on a recent ride from Yonkers to the city.

"They're so much smaller, so much more uncomfortable," he said. "Can we give them back?"

Well, no.

That's the answer from Salley: The buses are here to stay. As for what he and the others in the Transportation Department were thinking: It was cost and access for wheelchairs. The new Orion buses, a brand of Daimler Buses North America, cost just under \$400,000 each. That's about \$12 million for the 30 buses ordered. (So far, 17 have been delivered, starting around the end of summer.)

Buses like the old ones would have cost an additional \$198,000 each - or an additional \$6 million for the whole batch.

"The old buses - the MCIs - we would have loved to have had them," Salley said. "We cannot afford them." The Orion buses feature seats that can be folded up to make room for one or two wheelchairs, a feature the older buses didn't have. The lower floors are the trend in the industry, he said.

Salley noted that the fare for the express bus to Manhattan was reduced to \$5 from \$7 in April 2007, when the county began accepting MetroCards used on New York City buses and subways.

"Our costs certainly have not gone down," Salley said. But bad news came last week when Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which is responsible for buses and subways in New York City, proposed raising express bus fares from \$5 to \$7.50 starting in June as part of its push for a 23 percent increase in revenue from transit fares and bridge tolls. Those proposed increases would be subject to hearings in January following the adoption of the 2009 budget by the MTA board on Dec. 17. Salley said the increase would affect Bee-Line express buses to Manhattan as well because they're all tied in to the same Metro Card system.

Either way, some people aren't happy. They say they understand the need for wheelchair access, but that the buses are not comfortable when too many people board. Passenger Christina Stagno said she saw people so crowded on a recent trip that two guys were jostling each other, looking ready to fight, right over a woman in one of the seats.

"I'm thinking this whole time that this young woman was going to get punched right in the nose," said Stagno, 26. The buses are intended for the Manhattan BxM4C runs, and will also be used for the 77 line, running between White Plains and Carmel and the 43 line, from East 241st Street in the Bronx to Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla.

Carrie Schoen, who takes the 7:50 a.m. from Yonkers Avenue, said the seats aren't comfortable because they slant forward. Standing and trying to move down the aisle is difficult, she said.



"Walking down the aisle, there's nothing to grab onto except somebody's head," said Schoen, assistant director of a private nursery school on East 74th Street. Roberta Roane noted that riders have to step up a level to get into seats, and said that was a problem.

Shatz said the new buses come as the ridership is increasing. But that's not the whole story. Ridership jumped in 2007 to about 430,000 from about 407,000 the previous year, which in turn was a slight increase over the year before that. Salley attributed the increase last year to the MetroCard use, with its convenience and lower fares.

Over a longer run, ridership has declined. Salley said the service started back before Metro-North Railroad was formed 25 years ago. The previous commuter train system, run by Conrail, had plenty of defectors, he said. "That route came about in response to the horrible service on Conrail," Salley said. "Over the years, as Metro-North service has continued to improve, the ridership on that route has really dived."

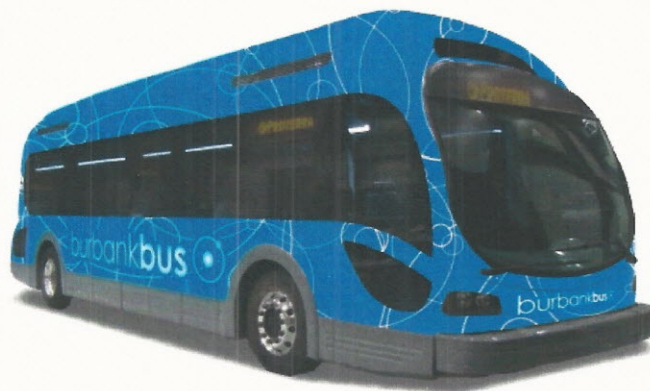
In 2000, the Bee-Line BxM4C buses gave about 700,000 rides. By 2005, that was down to 400,000, Salley said. For people like Shatz, the route is ideal. He walks to the stop at Roxbury Drive and rides to 22nd Street and Broadway. From there, he walks to The New York Foundling, at 17th Street and 6th Avenue, where he is the manager of volunteers and community relations. "It's a 10-minute walk; an easy walk," he said.

Lea DiLuca, who doesn't own a car, would have to walk a half-hour to the nearest Metro-North station rather than two blocks to the McLean Avenue stop. She was unhappy with buses that are often late, but she's more unhappy now that the buses are smaller. She said the air circulation system makes them cold, and, the people standing have it the worst.

"When it's stopping and starting," she said, "they're holding on for dear life."

## BURBANKBUS LAUNCHES THE FIRST HYDROGEN BUS ON THE WEST COAST

Burbank is making waves nationally as one of two test markets in the U.S. to experiment with the new hydrogen technology as part of its public transportation system. The zero emissions, ultra quiet prototype will be unveiled in spring 2009 in a ceremony in Downtown Burbank, and will go into immediate service on various routes within the BurbankBus network.



For further information about this prototype and the companies and organizations that are helping to make this project happen, please check out the following websites:

- Proterra
- Hydrogenics
- California Energy Commission
- California Air Resources Board
- Federal Transit Administration

If you are interested in finding out more about this project and the new hydrogen fuel technology, please contact Johnathan Frank at [jfrank@ci.burbank.ca.us](mailto:jfrank@ci.burbank.ca.us) or call (818) 238-5262.

## Casinos ready to run N.Y.-to-Atlantic City luxury trains

The train is almost at the station, just about ready to bring gamblers and their money to Atlantic City casinos growing increasingly anxious for more dollars.

Atlantic City Express Service, or ACES, begins weekend service between Penn Station in New York City and the Atlantic City Rail Terminal - with a stop at Newark Penn Station - on Feb. 6.







The service, starting about a year behind schedule, will carry passengers in bi-level rail cars outfitted with leather seats, a private lounge and custom-designed food and beverage kiosks. First-class passengers ride on the upper deck, and get food and beverage servers.



Upon arrival in Atlantic City, passengers get complimentary shuttle service to Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, Caesars Atlantic City and Harrah's Resort, the three gaming halls involved with the rail service.

Introductory one-way ticket prices for the 2-hour trip are \$50 for a coach seat and \$75 for a first-class seat.

"After careful planning and collaboration with our partners, we are thrilled to be able to launch this service for New York and New Jersey residents to be able to experience the best of each city through the comfort and convenience of the ACES train," Borgata President Larry Mullin said.

This isn't the first venture for an express train involving Atlantic City: Amtrak's so-called "Gamblers Express" ran for about six years and turned out to be a financial disaster.



Casino and NJ Transit officials are more optimistic about ACES, saying riders will find more to do in Atlantic City than those who took the "Gamblers Express." It also gives the casinos the chance to further tap the New York market and woo younger, free-spending gamblers to a city that's reinventing itself from a low-rolling daytripper town to a more affluent overnight tourist destination.



Casino marketing shows there are many people in New York City and northern New Jersey who for many reasons - including not having a car - have never made it to Atlantic City, said Caesars General Manager Dan Nita. It's hoped that ACES will attract some of those people, along with potential customers from New York who now opt for other vacation destinations, he said.

"The New York market has always been a leading market for Atlantic City and we see the launch of ACES as an opportunity to penetrate that market further," Nita said. "This direct service will make it easier for our current customers to get to Atlantic City and will give new customers yet another reason to visit."



"As Atlantic City continues to evolve into a world-class destination, we believe this service will convince more New Yorkers to get to know our city," Mullin said.

ACES is a joint venture among Borgata, Caesars, Harrah's, NJ Transit and the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority. It's running on a three-year trial basis.

The three casinos are paying \$15 million for eight bi-level cars. The CRDA is providing \$4.8 million to lease four diesel locomotives from Amtrak. ACES and the CRDA will jointly provide another \$4 million for operating costs.

A management contract with ACES has NJ Transit operating the trains and Amtrak providing the ticketing and reservation system.

The trains are currently being tested and ACES train staff are undergoing customer service training.

Aside from ACES, there is currently no direct rail service between New York City and Atlantic City.

Travelers have to take Amtrak on its Northeast Corridor line between Penn Station and 30th Street Station in Philadelphia, where they transfer to NJ Transit's Atlantic City rail line.

NJ Transit runs between Penn Station and Trenton, but is denied access by Amtrak to the portion of the Northeast Corridor line between Trenton and 30th Street Station.

More information about ACES can be found at [www.acestrain.com](http://www.acestrain.com).

E-mail Thomas Barlas:

## **CityLink Buys 10 Buses from Chicago**

### **Director says used buses are a temporary solution to a pressing problem**

By SCOTT HILYARD of the Journal Star  
Posted Jan 06, 2009 @ 11:16 PM  
PEORIA —

CityLink director Tom Lucek wishes he wasn't so thrilled to have received 10 ancient, seen-better-days buses last weekend from the Chicago Transit Authority.

"It's a pretty sad state of affairs to be so happy to get someone else's junk," Lucek said.

One transit authority's junk is another's Band-Aid mini-solution to a pressing need for more buses. The CTA was selling the remaining 50 of its TMC-brand buses - a model that hasn't been made for 18 years, Lucek said - for scrap and parts for about \$800 a bus. Forty already had gone to the scrap yard when Lucek learned of the remaining buses at a transit authority convention in Chicago. CityLink purchased the last 10 40-seater buses for \$9,027.70, less than half the cost of a 2009 Ford Mustang, and drove them to Peoria last weekend.

A CityLink news release praised the dependability of the used buses, faintly.

"All buses made it (to Peoria) on their own power," according to the prepared material.

Lucek said the buses are being inspected one at a time, and it will be determined if they will be added to the fleet or used as substitutes, buses pressed into duty when a regular bus is out of service for maintenance. Eight of the 10 buses have relatively new diesel engines.

Lucek said the buses are a temporary patch on a permanent problem. With no capital budget in place in Illinois, the state's transit districts are struggling, Lucek said. Also, a \$40 million federal earmark - for 30 new buses, a maintenance garage and a new fleet of para-transit vans - languishes in Washington, D.C., at a time when earmarks can be politically toxic.

"Truthfully we need the passage of the earmark in order to get us out of the rut we're in," Lucek said.

Also, the beginning of January marked the first month of bus service in Bartonville and expanded service to Pekin. The one-year demonstration, paid for with a federal grant through the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, provides an express bus through Bartonville Monday through Friday that begins at the Downtown CityLink Transit Center. It then travels southwest on Washington Street, north on Garfield Street in Bartonville and east on Airport Road. The final



stop is XPac on Smithville Road in Bartonville. There are five trips a day to and from the Transit Center.

In December the routes averaged 13.2 passenger trips per day.

At the end of the year, Bartonville will have to decide whether it wants to continue the service and enter into a contract with CityLink.

Expanded service from Pekin to Peoria - an increase from six trips a day to 18 - has averaged 171 passenger trips a day.

Terry Kohlbus, the executive director of the regional planning commission, thought the ridership numbers were satisfactory.

"Given the weather over the past month and the newness of the service, I am inclined to think those are decent numbers for now," Kohlbus said.

Scott Hilyard can be reached at 686-3244 or at [shilyard@pjstar.com](mailto:shilyard@pjstar.com).

## **Essay: Is mass transit in Metro Detroit for real this time?**

**James David Dickson**

Detroit holds the dubious distinction of being the only major city in America without a reliable and coordinated mass transit system. It was fine to not have a transit system back in the days when the auto industry was strong, people were pulling down end-of-year bonuses and gas prices hovered around \$1 a gallon.

But at the end of a decade that's witnessed a seven year recession in this state, hundreds of thousands of lost manufacturing jobs and gas prices creep over \$4, families from Warren to West Bloomfield have found themselves wondering why cars are the only reliable form of transportation in Metro Detroit.

Young college graduates, many of whom pay student loans in lieu of a car payment and auto insurance, end up asking themselves the same question -- and answering it by moving to transit-friendly cities like Chicago or New York.

"Young professionals do not want to go to a place where they have to own a car," said John Hertel, the transit czar of Metro Detroit who was commissioned by regional leaders in 2006 to plan and build the consensus for a transit system in Southeast Michigan. "They don't want to figure out how they're going to pay for the car, how they're going to pay for the insurance, for gas, for a place to park -- they're not interested in that. They like

places where they can get around quickly and efficiently. The lifeblood of a community is how able it is to draw young people to keep that place moving along, in terms of new families and new ideas. Young people bring those things with them."

But Detroit's recent transplants might be interested to know that Metro Detroit is closer to establishing a mass transit system today than at any point since the last city-owned streetcars were sold off to Mexico City in the 1950s.

History was made on Dec. 8 at the offices of the Miller-Canfield law firm in downtown Detroit, when the so-called Big Four -- Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel, Jr., Wayne and Oakland County executives Robert Ficano and L. Brooks Patterson, along with William Crouchman, chairman of the Macomb County Commission -- voted unanimously in favor of Hertel's 25-year master plan for mass transit in Metro Detroit.

Twenty-four times in the past half-century serious proposals for mass transit in Detroit have been brought to regional leaders. Only once have regional leaders agreed to such a proposal -- this time. "That was a complex, long-term plan that (the Big Four) agreed to," Hertel said. "It was the first time this region has ever put its unanimous support behind a transit proposal." "In the past, this was 'auto city,'" Crouchman said. "People loved their cars. But with some of the developments we've seen over the past few years, with layoffs and gas prices all over the place -- that won't last forever."

Regional transit is literally in uncharted waters. For supporters and skeptics alike the question remains: Is mass transit for real this time, or will it unravel as so many other ventures calling for regional cooperation have in the past?

### **"If and only if"**

Hertel, whose official title is the chief executive of the Regional Transit Coordinating Council, is a former chair of both the Wayne and Macomb County commissions. Hertel's influence as one of the better respected and connected political figures in southeast Michigan paid dividends when his bosses agreed to his comprehensive regional transit proposal.

That Hertel reports only to county leaders is strategic. It acts as an effective buffer between Hertel and the mayors and township supervisors in the tri-county area. While Hertel has made a point to meet these leaders and sell them on his 25 year vision for transit in Southeast Michigan, every skeptic can't be won over and won't need to be. While municipal leaders certainly have a voice in the transit plan, only four individuals hold a vote. Their unanimous consent is required for every step of the process.

Crouchman credits Hertel's influence for the proposal having gotten this far. "He's more of a diplomat than a



politician. He dissected the problem, approached it under-the-radar, and has taken it one piece at a time." Private disagreements between the four stakeholders are kept under wraps, giving personalities less an opportunity to throw the regional transit plan apart.

Fewer people to convince means fewer who can scuttle the process. After the agreement on the 25-year framework, two more major steps stand between Metro Detroit and the creation of a mass transit system. On June 30, Hertel must submit a proposal to the Big Four for the establishment of a regional authority that will operate the transit system. Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano says that each of the stakeholders will be looking for equal representation on this transit authority. And because each step of the process must be signed off on unanimously, any attempt to deny a stakeholder a fair share could come at the cost of unraveling the transit plan. If the Big Four supports Hertel's proposal it will require legislative approval to go into effect. As long as all parties remain reasonable, this shouldn't be a sticking point.

From there it's a matter of deciding who will pay for the plan, and how much. This has been the bane of regional ventures in the past but Hertel believes that the groundswell of public support for mass transit will drive the actions of regional leaders and not vice versa. Even if federal dollars are invested in mass transit in Metro Detroit, the region will still have to raise half the system's construction costs and establish a permanent operations tax to keep it running.

Unlike the current regional bus line, SMART, municipalities won't be allowed to opt-out of the new regional system. Today, 400,000 people in the tri-county area live in municipalities that have chosen not to receive SMART bus service. "We're all in this together," Hertel said.

But Hertel doesn't believe that the political will for needed tax increases will be tough to come by. "I've spoken with people from all walks of life that support this vision," he said. "Leaders in the business community never tell me that mass transit in Metro Detroit is a bad idea -- they ask how quickly we can get it done. For every \$1 we invest in mass transit we can expect to get back anywhere from \$4 to \$8 in return. Even if we only got \$3 back for every dollar spent, that's a great investment."

And in a state mired in the depths of a recession that forecasters say won't end until 2010 at the earliest, any investment strategy that figures to offer a 4-to-1 return is hard to ignore.

But there are still doubters. "We tend to be skeptical of standardized formulas," Deputy Oakland County Executive Gerald Poisson said. "Besides, 79 percent of the jobs in this area are more than 10 miles from the city center. I don't think the suburbs will take actions that would reverse the flow of people that's been going on

since 1946, away from Detroit and into the suburbs." Oakland's Patterson asked last year in a visit to The Detroit News' editorial board, "Is there any evidence that transit actually drives business investment? Are the areas near the People Mover witnessing a greater level of investment than elsewhere?"

Still, Patterson voted in favor of Hertel's plan.

## **The plan and the need**

The first phase of Hertel's plan calls for Arterial Rapid Transit. This would consolidate the region's two bus lines, SMART and DDOT, expanding and standardizing service, and would also bring the People Mover under the regional umbrella. Phase One includes a privately-funded light rail project along Woodward Avenue which will connect to the commuter rail from Detroit to Ann Arbor that's set to break ground in 2010.

It is that Woodward rail line, Crouchman said, that will whet the appetites of Metro Detroiters to complete Hertel's ambitious plan. "I think that once people can see, touch, and ride the light rail on Woodward, the idea of mass transit will feel more real," he said. "People will want more."

The second phase is Bus Rapid Transit. These buses, best thought of as "trains on rubber tires," will operate on exclusive rights-of-way physically separated from automobile traffic. Bus Rapid Transit will be implemented in high-traffic corridors and, over time, will replace some Arterial Rapid Transit lines.

Part three calls for the expansion of Bus Rapid Transit and the establishment of a Light Rail system. Light Rail stops will serve the highest-traffic areas and operate at high speed, with at least a mile between each station. After the Arterial Rapid Transit system is built, between 2009 and 2012, the second and third phases will move forward "if and only if" ridership is substantial and cost estimates are in line with what the region is willing to pay.

"Is there a groundswell of support for a transit system? Yes," said Oakland's Poisson. "Is there a groundswell to pay for such a system? No. Even the best systems have magnificent problems."

Nor can any regional transit system in Metro Detroit count on state support, Poisson said. "I sit on the board of SMART and our support from the state has dwindled. We're supposed to get 50 percent of our operating costs from the state. Last year we only received 29 percent. Would it go any differently with a regional transit system? I doubt it."

But not having mass transit has limited Detroit's ability to attract business investment. Employers are willing to pay high labor costs and even high taxes if they can attract top talent. What they're not willing to do is open shop in cities that are unattractive to young professionals. For young workers unable to afford a car and its associated



expenses, Detroit literally never even enters the conversation.

That it would take 25 years to build a comprehensive regional transit system in Metro Detroit is the best argument in favor of breaking ground immediately. A report last June from Michigan Future Inc. found Metro Detroit is falling behind in attracting and retraining young professionals compared with other Great Lakes cities such as Chicago and Minneapolis.

In Chicago, one in every three young professionals lives in the city. In Minneapolis/St. Paul, 16 percent of young professionals live in one of the two cities. In Metro Detroit, just five percent, or one in 20, young professionals live in the city.

This hurts the region when it comes to courting business investment. As author and urban studies expert Richard Florida points out, the presence of young professionals is essential to a region's economic growth. Wrote Florida in his newest book, "Who's Your City": "The places that attract young people end up being winners in the nationwide competition for talent. This does not bode well for cities that seem to believe they will be able to attract young people who have moved away for fun and adventure once they hit their thirties and decide to settle down and start families. The numbers simply don't add up. Places that lost young people will never be able to recoup, since moving slows down with age."

Florida's research shows that young families are more likely to settle in suburbs near where they live rather than pack up and move back to their hometowns. This is especially true if that hometown has few jobs to offer. "If every other initiative at the state, regional and local level to grow the Michigan economy works, but we do not change (Michigan's proportion of young professionals), we will almost surely continue to decline in prosperity compared to the nation," concludes the Michigan Future report. "Unless Michigan, compared to the country, gets younger and better educated, we will continue to get poorer."

### **The time is now**

Metro Detroit politicians see hope in President-elect Barack Obama's promise to rebuild urban infrastructure. "Obama clearly 'gets it' in terms of urban issues and the importance of big cities and the role that they play within larger metropolitan areas," said Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr. "That helps."

Wayne's Ficano added that "for Metro Detroit to be world-class, we need a mass transit infrastructure. I believe that the president-elect understands the importance of infrastructure investments and I believe we have a solid plan in place."

Hertel added that, "the Obama administration is looking for legitimate, complete, workable plans. We have to get ours in quick because we know everyone else is going to have their hands out."

The changing face of the Southeast Michigan economy has highlighted the need for reliable regional transit. "Even if, in a few years, we have the same amount of jobs that we have today, jobs incomes won't be as high," Hertel said. "Under that scenario I believe that mass transit will become a necessity."

Between the flagging Michigan economy, which turned residents on to the need for public transit, and uncertain gasoline prices, the conditions have never been more ideal for the establishment of a transit system in Detroit. Whether it actually happens is a matter of policy, political will and always-elusive regional cooperation. But it's closer to reality than it's ever been, at a time when the region is looking for an economic spark and new, high-tech business investment to replace a manufacturing sector that will never be the tent pole it once was.

"We've already learned the danger of being narrow in terms of scope and depending so much on one segment of the economy," Hertel warned. "There's another danger of literally being backwards, as compared to the rest of the world. It's time we get past that."

You can reach James Dickson at (313) 222-2299 or [jdickson@detnews.com](mailto:jdickson@detnews.com).

## **Defective Sacramento light-rail tickets to be recalled**

By Tony Bizjak  
[tbizjak@sacbee.com](mailto:tbizjak@sacbee.com)  
Published: Saturday, Jan. 10, 2009 | Page 6B

More than 100,000 new Sacramento light-rail tickets have turned out to be defective and will be recalled, Regional Transit officials said Friday.

Vending machines at rail stations are unable to stamp the usage date and time on the tickets, officials say, which could allow unscrupulous riders to reuse them.

In question are prepaid regular daily \$2.25 tickets distributed during the last two weeks of December — purchased from stores or businesses in packets of 10.

RT General Manager Mike Wiley estimated as many as 113,000 are defective. About 4 percent of the transit system's daily riders are affected, he said.

All tickets purchased at light-rail vending machines are valid, however, officials said. And all other types of tickets, including daily and monthly passes, remain valid.

The \$2.25 tickets went into circulation Jan. 1 as part of a fare increase. Officials discovered the problem during tests Dec. 31.

RT's Wiley said that so far the tickets appear to have caused more confusion than misuse, he said.



The surface coating on the tickets isn't allowing vending machines to stamp the ticket with the time and date of use.

That is prompting some riders to put the tickets into the machines a second time. The machines' screens then inform the rider the ticket is invalid.

"We're telling riders to go ahead and ride," Wiley said, "then toss the ticket away."

Fare checkers on light-rail trains who come across a passenger with a defective ticket have been instructed to take the ticket and give the passenger a transfer slip to continue the ride, Wiley said.

RT will begin a ticket exchange next Thursday and will recode its vending machines at light-rail stations Sunday, Feb. 15, to reject the defective tickets.

RT officials have contacted the ticket manufacturer, Electronic Data Magnetics of North Carolina, and say they expect that company to pay any costs that RT incurs.

Ticket company representatives could not be reached Friday evening.

The defective tickets can continue to be used on RT buses, officials said, because they are collected by the driver when passengers board.

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*Call The Bee's Tony Bizjak, (916) 321-1059*

## **Mid-Jordan extension: New TRAX line money in the bank**

**\$428 million for west-side span**

By Brandon Loomis  
The Salt Lake Tribune

Updated: 01/10/2009 09:01:56 AM MST

**Midvale »** A federal funding agreement that assures completion of the Mid-Jordan TRAX line is the surest signal that Utah's burgeoning transit system is maturing, Midvale Mayor JoAnn Seghini said Friday at a signing ceremony.

The \$428.3 million that the Federal Transit Administration delivered Friday to the Utah Transit Authority marks tremendous progress since Salt Lake Valley voters initially rejected a tax for light rail in the 1990s, she said. This line to West Jordan and others to West Valley City, Draper and the Salt Lake City International Airport will complete a web of transportation alternatives that was hard to imagine when a single rail line opened from Sandy to Salt Lake City in 1999.

"The north-south line is no longer just a line," Seghini said. "We are seeing an integral part of a system."

The Mid-Jordan line, splitting from the north-south line at 6400 South and leading to the Rio Tinto Group's new Daybreak development, is now at least 25 percent complete and on schedule to open in December 2011, according to UTA. Most of the finished work involves signal installation and engineering, rather than track laying.

The grant agreement formally approved Friday represents 80 percent of the project's cost. UTA will cover the rest through sales taxes.

Acting FTA Administrator Sherry Little presented the grant and praised Utah for being at the forefront of a transportation revolution. UTA's start of a rail program back during the buildup to the 2002 Winter Olympics, she added, positions it to have one of the nation's most extensive systems.

"Salt Lake City has been, is and will continue to be ahead of the curve in public transportation," Little said.

The Bush administration has funded the most mass-transit projects in U.S. history, Little said after the ceremony, and she believes the Obama administration will continue the funding stream even in difficult financial times.

"I anticipate that when the Obama folks see future gas prices going up and people sitting in their cars in traffic, they will want to pursue other options," Little said. "I'm really pretty optimistic about the future."

Friday's ceremony was in a vacant lot just east of the rail line's future Gardner Village stop, near the Jordan River. The area is fast being encircled by the plywood walls of unfinished apartments and condominiums along the future rail route. UTA officials said such development, coupled with the massive transit-accessible housing construction emerging at Daybreak, demonstrate the power of rail lines to reshape the valley.

"It's going to be one of the prime places for people to live in this area," UTA General Manager John English said.

The Mid-Jordan line is part of UTA's plans to build 70 miles of new rails by 2015, including the other TRAX lines and a diesel-powered FrontRunner commuter-rail extension from Salt Lake City to Provo.

bloomis@sltrib.com

## **Chicago loses \$153 million transit grant; Daley blames feds for blown deadline**

**Funds would have launched plan for bus-only lanes to speed commuters**

By Jon Hilkevitch and Dan Mihalopoulos | Tribune reporters  
**January 9, 2009**

Chicago and CTA officials have only themselves to blame for forfeiting a \$153 million federal grant pegged to help ease traffic gridlock, U.S. transportation officials said Thursday.



The fumble marks a major setback in efforts to improve mobility in the nation's second most congested region. It means Chicago will be forced to put on hold a promising plan that would use bus-only lanes, special quick-boarding stations and high-tech traffic signals until city officials can try for funding from Barack Obama's administration.

The grant would have paid for a Chicago Transit Authority project to whisk bus riders through rush-hour traffic and to begin variable-pricing of parking meters during peak periods to reduce driving downtown and increase mass-transit ridership.

Mayor Richard Daley insisted his administration was not responsible for the loss of the \$153 million. "We did everything possible," Daley said at an event with CTA officials. He accused federal officials of being inflexible by refusing to extend a deadline to meet the requirements of the grant, which was considered a shoo-in since last spring when U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters signed an agreement with the mayor. The CTA had planned to test bus-only lanes on portions of Chicago Avenue, Halsted Street, 79th Street and Jeffery Boulevard starting in the middle of this year.

The loss of the federal grant also means that the CTA will be forced to postpone the purchase of double-long, hybrid buses that were to be assigned to the four corridors.

The bus rapid transit project was slated to start with about 10 miles of bus-only lanes and expand to more than 100 miles, speeding up bus commutes. CTA buses on average travel 9 miles per hour in city traffic. CTA officials had said bus-only lanes could cut travel times in half by 2010.

Federal authorities said that even if they were able to approve a 13-day extension for the grant application that Chicago officials sought, there was no way the mandated activities and documentation could have been completed.

"Chicago waited too long to get their application submitted in full," said Doug Hecox, a spokesman for the Federal Highway Administration.

One of the fundamental omissions was that city and CTA officials failed to conduct an adequate number of public meetings, officials said.

The grant was contingent on the city's 2008 approval of congestion-pricing for parking meters, the lease of its parking meter system and related requirements.

The City Council approved a deal to lease its parking meter system to a private operator in December. Daley said the lease was months behind schedule because of the credit crunch, and the Bush administration should

have given the city more time to work it out.

"They're inflexible, the federal government," the mayor said. "You have to be flexible. They're flexible for the banks. They're flexible for bailing everyone out. But when it comes to us. . . ."

jhilkevitch@tribune.com dmihalopoulos@tribune.com

## Tim Landis: SMTD planning transfer center

By Staff Report  
GateHouse News Service  
Posted Jan 10, 2009 @ 11:17 PM

**SPRINGFIELD MASS TRANSIT DISTRICT** managing director Linda Tisdale puts it this way: "We will build a transfer center."

A technical, but important, bureaucratic step has just been taken toward an all-in-one transit complex planned at the east edge of downtown Springfield by issuance of a request for bids to begin land appraisals.

Land acquisition will be close behind if the feds continue to cooperate with money, Tisdale said.

"It's just a matter of timing and getting the funding into place," she said.

To recap, SMTD has its eye on a tract of land along Ninth Street just north of the Sangamon County Building. The property is bordered by Washington Street on the north, Adams Street on the south and 11th Street on the east.

The goal is to create a single stop for buses, taxis and eventually passenger trains, though that particular piece is expected to take much longer as it would require relocation of the Amtrak line through Springfield.

"There are several landowners in that area," said Tisdale, though early indications have been that the land is available.

The Federal Transportation Administration just approved a district environmental analysis that concluded the site is best suited for the transit center. Now, the agency has the go-ahead to apply for money to buy land and build.

Tisdale said the district has used about \$1 million a year from a \$5 million federal allocation approved four years ago.

"We don't know until we negotiate purchases if there'll be money left. In that case, we can go ahead and begin construction," Tisdale said.

It's always hard to predict the pace of the federal bureaucracy, but Tisdale said she hopes to have approval of the land appraisals by the end of next month.

"We just have to go through the process, but it is moving."