



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

MARCH/APRIL 2011

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

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

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

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

• MARCH/APRIL MEETINGS

The March meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on March 4, 2011, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2751 W. Winona Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

Our program for the evening will be a slide presentation by member John LeBeau. The program will be Western Canada Part 2.

The April meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on April 1, 2011 at the CTA Maintenance Training Facility. More details will be announced at the March meeting.

Amtrak exploring O'Hare service

Proposal would link airport with Union Station, points downstate

February 20, 2011 | By Jon Hilkevitch | Getting Around

In the future, one of the carriers serving travelers at O'Hare International Airport may be Amtrak.

Gov. Pat Quinn has asked Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman to conduct a study examining what it would take, logistically and financially, to commence fast, nonstop passenger rail service between Chicago Union Station and O'Hare, your Getting Around reporter has learned.

The governor envisions the proposed rail line, which at this point is strictly conceptual, as offering a more extensive reach than the O'Hare branch of the CTA Blue Line, which runs between the Loop and the airport, and Mayor Richard Daley's plan for premium "Airport Express" service between the uncompleted Block 37 "super station" downtown and O'Hare.

Quinn's plan certainly would not resemble the impractical idea for a bullet train to O'Hare that Daley touted home last year after he rode a magnetic levitation train in Shanghai. The Shanghai Transrapid maglev train must start braking shortly after reaching its top speed of 268 mph, and it doesn't even go into downtown Shanghai.

But Quinn does see opportunities to build a synergistic connection between O'Hare, which serves tens of millions of air travelers each year, and state efforts to draw customers to the 110 mph passenger rail corridors it is constructing, beginning with the 284-mile route between Chicago and **St. Louis**.

Downtown Chicago and O'Hare represent the two largest employment centers in Illinois, creating a perfect setting for a premier trains-to-planes service that would attract new employers and riders, Quinn said.

"This connection would also provide better access to downstate cities and significantly boost ridership" outside the Chicago area, the governor wrote in a letter to Boardman this month.

"Advancing this connection would also establish O'Hare as a central — and connected — component of the nine-state, 110-mph Midwest Regional Rail System," the Quinn letter said.

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association already has supported an express rail link connecting O'Hare and Union Station. The association also has proposed that the higher-speed routes planned for the Midwest be linked directly to O'Hare to accommodate Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana travelers who will be able to ride trains to and from O'Hare.

The governor asked Boardman to complete the study this summer. The initial questions he wants answered include how quickly service could be introduced, where Amtrak would accommodate the airport trains at Union Station, where the O'Hare station might be located on airport property and "how we would make rail-air ticketing and baggage connections seamless for passengers."

One of the biggest problems is developing a route to O'Hare from tracks Amtrak uses.

Metra's North Central Service to Antioch operates limited weekday-only service from Union Station with stops at the O'Hare Transfer Station, which is on the fringes of the airport near Economy Parking Lot F and the Cell Phone Lot. Metra uses the Wisconsin Central Railroad tracks, which are owned by the Canadian National Railway. One reason Metra has not increased its North Central Service schedule is that CN has refused to expand the commuter railroad's track privileges, officials said.

The Amtrak study that Quinn requested will include discussions with CN/Wisconsin Central and Metra, said John Webber, a spokesman for the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Another potential setback for the rail link is that the Chicago Department of Aviation has at least temporarily shelved plans for a western airline terminal under the city's O'Hare Modernization Program. In addition to providing aircraft gates, the western terminal was envisioned as including facilities for rail connections to Metra and the Blue Line, as well as to a proposed extension of the People Mover airport transit system that would link the western terminal to the main terminal complex.

Despite the hurdles, Amtrak officials are enthusiastic about exploring the proposal, said Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari.

"We know that on several of our routes, downstate people hop off the train at Joliet or Naperville to take taxicabs to O'Hare or Midway Airport," Magliari said.

Noting that the number of airline flights in Illinois outside the Chicago area has decreased and airfares have increased, Magliari said, "If there were a way to get more people downstate connected with air, it would strengthen our already strong ridership."

Amtrak provides more than 150,000 rides each year on its Hiawatha service from Chicago Union Station to General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee. Amtrak also shares a station in St. Louis with light-rail trains serving Lambert-St. Louis International Airport.

Trains-to-planes partnerships have become common between rail operators and airlines in Europe and other parts of the world. Such collaborations offer the most efficient and pleasant way to travel on trips of 500 miles or less.

It's begun to slowly catch on in the U.S. For instance, on the Continental Airlines website, travel can be booked from Philadelphia to Lyon, France. The trip begins at Philly's 30th Street rail station, where passengers board an hour-long train to Newark Liberty International Airport. The rest of the trip is via air.

Contact Getting Around at jhilkevitch@tribune.com or c/o the Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611. Read recent columns at chicagotribune.com/gettingaround.

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Metra: We mishandled blizzard

By Richard Wronski
Tribune reporter
10:09 AM CST, February 11, 2011

Metra officials this morning admitted that despite their best efforts they weren't able to adequately deal with the blizzard and didn't do a good job of getting word out to customers soon enough.

Metra waited too long to decide to go to reduced service -- its Sunday schedule -- and didn't tell riders quickly enough, said deputy director Bill Tupper.

"We didn't want to admit we couldn't do it," Tupper said.

Although some staff worked 40 to 60 hours straight through the blizzard, they still couldn't get enough crews to run trains and clear tracks and equipment. Despite putting up crews in motels near outlying stations, those crews often couldn't travel even a mile in McHenry, Lake, Will and Kane counties because roads in those areas were completely shut down, Tupper said.

Quinn signs bill limiting free rides for seniors

By Monique Garcia Tribune reporter
3:52 p.m. CST, February 14, 2011

Seniors will no longer automatically qualify for free bus and train rides under legislation Gov. Pat Quinn plans to sign into law today.

Instead, income limits would be put in place in order for people 65 and older to ride free -- a move supporters say will help transit agencies struggling with shaky budgets but still provide free rides to those most in need.

Quinn had previously said he would not scale back the program but changed his mind. The Regional Transit Authority had fought to limit the free rides, saying they cost the agency about \$68 million a year.

The free rides program was put in place under Gov. Rod Blagojevich, and lawmakers have been trying to roll it back for the past several years.

To qualify for free rides under the new law, a single

senior would have to have an annual income of \$27,610 or less. For a household of two, the income limit would be less than \$36,635. For households of three or more, the annual income would have to be \$45,657 or less.

Toshiba wins 30 bil. yen train orders for Washington, Chicago

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Toshiba Corp. said Thursday its U.S. subsidiary, Toshiba International Corp., has won orders worth up to around 30 billion yen to supply key equipment and systems for trains that will be delivered to U.S. transit authorities in Washington D.C. and Chicago.

The announcement comes as Toshiba aims to expand the provision of electrical systems for rolling stock in North America in anticipation of market growth due to needs for urban rail and subway system upgrades and the planned introduction of high-speed trains.

Toshiba International's train driver systems will be offered to Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in Washington D.C. and the Metra, the Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corp. in Chicago, Illinois.

The WMATA order was received from Kawasaki Rail Car Inc., the U.S. unit of Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd., and covers motors and traction drive systems, including inverters and gears, for 364 cars that KRC will supply to WMATA. The contract may be extended to a further 64 cars and also includes an option for a maximum of 320 more cars that would boost the final total to a maximum of 748 cars.

The Metra order, received from Nippon Sharyo Manufacturing LLC., the U.S. subsidiary of Nippon Sharyo Ltd., covers motors and traction drive systems for 160 bi-level electric passenger rail cars that Nippon Sharyo and Sumitomo Corp. will supply to Metra.

Toshiba International plans to start deliveries of equipment and systems for Metra in October and for WMATA in January 2012.

Toshiba is seeking to boost the overseas sales share of its transportation system business from 40 percent in fiscal 2009 that ended March 2010 to 70 percent by fiscal 2015. By taking its transportation system business to the global level, the company said it aims to achieve annual worldwide sales of over 200 billion yen in the business by fiscal 2015.

(Mainichi Japan) January 20, 2011

NICTD gets \$800K grant for study

Focus is best route through the city

**By Alicia Ebaugh
Staff Writer**

Published: Friday, October 29, 2010 8:13 PM CDT
MICHIGAN CITY — A study on the best route for the South Shore to take through Michigan City will finally come to fruition.

Last week, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced an \$800,000 TIGER II grant was awarded to Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District for a proposed \$1 million study of potential realignments for the commuter rail line.

"I'm very pleased it was able to come together," Mayor Chuck Oberlie said. "Now, we'll be able to develop all options, and hopefully the community can work together to come to a consensus on the best one."

U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar, R-Indiana, helped procure the grant, Oberlie said.

NICTD and Michigan City will split the \$200,000 local portion of the study funding, with the federal government providing the rest. The Michigan City Redevelopment Commission will kick in \$10,000.

NICTD wants the money to help study alternatives to the South Shore Line's current alignment along 11th Street that would make operations more efficient and reduce costs. Agency spokesman John Parsons said the study will look into four proposed routes — two northerly routes, a new 10th-and-11th Street route or a southerly route — to determine which is most feasible.

"The study will try to answer fundamental issues related to cost and the community," he said. "It should also be able to find any fatal flaws that could doom a plan due to environmental risk."

With the original South Shore plan, NICTD intended to improve its service by pulling out the embedded tracks in 11th Street and realigning the route along 10th and 11th streets. The NICTD proposal calls for closing the two existing stations and building a new one between the historic downtown and Lighthouse Place Premium Outlets.

Upgrading the track along the 10th- and 11th-Street corridor would move the track to the south side of the street, requiring the purchase of more than 100 privately owned buildings and the closure of 17 street crossings across the city, Parsons has said. The study also will look into an alternative alignment of the northerly route along Michigan Boulevard, Oberlie said.

The northerly route would cost more than \$200 million and creating the 10th- and 11th-Street tracks \$65 million, according to NICTD officials quoted in agency board meeting minutes. The plans to relocate the South Shore Line near the CSX tracks also would cost more than \$65 million.

Parsons hopes NICTD and city officials could start working together this winter on the study, hiring consultants early next year who will analyze the environmental, operational and community impact of each plan. He hopes the study would be completed within 18 months.

In the coming weeks, Oberlie said he wants to help the Michigan City Common Council put together a citizen advisory group that will be involved in the process.

The Reasons Why

Why does Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District say it needs to move the South Shore railroad tracks in Michigan City?

- Railroad alignment and track speed: The two miles of track have two severe horizontal curves and one vertical curve compounded by 34 grade crossings with a posted track speed of 25 mph, reducing actual speeds to less than 15 mph.
- Conflict with parallel and crossing vehicular traffic: The South Shore operates in the middle of 10th and 11th streets, with parallel vehicular traffic running east and west. It's not uncommon for vehicles to wander into the path of a train.
- Signal issues: Rain and snow melt mixes with road salts, and that mixture rapidly deteriorates rail fasteners and shunts track circuits. This creates false shunting of the signal system and highway rail grade crossing warning devices, turning all signals red and forcing trains to operate at restricted speeds.
- Overhead wire: Because of the distance from street curb to track center, NICTD is limited to a single suspended trolley wire instead of the standard, more resilient two-wire configuration. The curb location of the pole line supporting the trolley wire, signals and communications also is vulnerable to automobile accidents.
- Maintenance costs: This segment of track is the most expensive to maintain. NICTD must periodically undertake an expensive, time-consuming replacement program requiring the excavation and removal of several items. This requires closure of streets to vehicular traffic and temporary busing of train passengers.
- Inadequate passenger stations: NICTD has two station stops in Michigan City with minimal accommodations and inadequate parking capacity. The Carroll Avenue station is classified as an ADA key station that requires the use of a portable, hand-operated lift. It can easily take 10 minutes to board passengers with disabilities there. The 11th Street station is not ADA accessible.

Source: NICTD

Diesel era ends for MTA buses

Metro is now the only major transit agency in the U.S. with a fleet run entirely on alternative fuels. Officials say the shift has sharply cut emissions of cancer-causing pollution.

After almost two decades of effort to reduce vehicle emissions, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority retired its last diesel bus Wednesday and became the only major transit agency in the nation with a fleet that is totally equipped with alternative-fuel technologies.

In an urban area where diesel buses began operating in 1940, the MTA now has 2,221 buses powered by compressed natural gas, as well as one electric bus and six gasoline-electric hybrids.

Transit officials estimate that the elimination of diesel engines has reduced the release of cancer-causing particulates from the bus fleet by 80% and greenhouse gases by about 300,000 pounds a day in one of the smoggiest areas of the country.

MTA officials say that compressed natural gas buses cost more to buy and maintain than those powered by diesel but that the increased expenses are offset somewhat over the long run by lower fuel costs.

Not only is this an important step for air quality, it sets the bar for other transportation agencies to follow," said Joe Lyou, president of the Coalition for Clean Air, a statewide organization based in Los Angeles. "Now when an MTA bus pulls up, you don't run away anymore from the huge cloud of exhaust."

The last diesel coach is a 40-foot New Flyer purchased in 1998. It operated out of the MTA's Venice division, where it logged many of its 383,180 miles on routes along Wilshire Boulevard, Venice Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway.

No. 3004 was ceremoniously retired and towed away during an event at the MTA's Support Services Center in downtown Los Angeles. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, MTA Chief Executive Art Leahy, other elected officials and members of the authority's board of directors were on hand.

Officials plan to auction the vehicle, which is probably worth a few thousand dollars because of its parts. Before the sale, however, mechanics will disable the engine so no one can operate it again.

"We've been on this path for 20 years or longer," Leahy said. "What this means is that we are not importing as much foreign fuel to run our bus system and we are running on much cleaner fuel. It's a great day for Los Angeles."

Statistics from the American Public Transportation Assn. show that the MTA is well ahead of Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, New York and other large metropolitan areas in replacing diesel buses with more environmentally friendly vehicles.

According to the association, a couple of dozen smaller transit agencies, including those in Oxnard and Santa Barbara, have already replaced their entire fleets, while other agencies across the nation have made significant progress.

"I applaud Metro," said William Millar, president of the transportation association. "It is important to note that this achievement did not happen overnight. L.A. Metro and its predecessor organizations have been at the leading edge of clean bus fuel technology for about a quarter of a century."

The Southern California Rapid Transit District and the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission began experimenting with alternative fuels such as natural gas, methanol and ethanol in the late 1980s. Those tests continued after both agencies became the MTA in 1993.

The MTA took delivery of its first natural gas buses in 1995. The technology has increased the price of a standard bus by about \$50,000. Diesel coaches cost around \$400,000.

Since then, the authority's clean-fuel buses have traveled about a billion miles, and officials say they regularly receive inquiries from transit agencies around the world interested in shifting to alternative power sources.

Though the MTA has converted its fleet, the agency still contracts with private bus lines that rely on diesel fuel. Of the 187 private buses, 82 have diesel engines, but transit officials say those should be phased out in the next several years.

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2nd Grant to CTA for Special Express Busing

December 21, 2010 12:26 PM

The CTA has received a second federal grant to plan for rapid transit-style bus service, this one aimed at shortening commuting times on north-south cross-town trips, officials said today.

The Federal Transit Administration awarded the CTA \$1.6 million to help design the special express bus service along the transit agency's western corridor.

Key features of bus rapid transit include the use of bus-only lanes, particularly during rush periods, and on-board technology that communicates with traffic signals

to allow buses to pass through busy intersections ahead of other traffic.

Over the summer the CTA received an \$11 million grant to develop bus rapid transit lines on the Jeffery corridor between the South Side and downtown. The service will operate on Jeffery Boulevard from 103rd Street and Stony Island Avenue to Jefferson and Washington streets west of the Loop.

The CTA also this summer received a \$24.6 million grant to introduce rapid transit buses that will operate as a downtown circulator to move large numbers of commuters quickly on designated bus-priority lanes, officials said.

Known as the Chicago Central Area Transitway, the route would connect Union Station and Navy Pier with selected stops in between that are served by at least seven CTA bus routes.

The buses will stop near CTA and Metra rail stations. The transitway would eventually be expanded to connect all of the West Loop with North Michigan Avenue, Illinois Center, the Museum Campus and McCormick Place.

The CTA's western corridor covers 21 square miles from Howard Street on the north, Ashland Avenue on the east, 95th Street on the south and Western Avenue on the west.

The new bus service along the corridor is intended to fill gaps between CTA and Metra rail lines for about 250,000 riders and improve transportation to jobs, officials said.

"Today's funding will help decrease travel times, improve reliability and expand public transit choices," said U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D., Ill.

Bus rapid transit is quicker to implement and much less expensive to build than fixed-guideway systems like the CTA's heavy rail lines or light rail systems that operate in some U.S. cities.

The CTA and the Daley administration had hoped to have already begun a bus rapid transit pilot project on four city corridors. In addition to Jeffery, they are on Halsted Street, from Waveland Avenue and Broadway to 79th Street; Chicago Avenue, from Austin Boulevard to Navy Pier; and 79th Street, from the Ford City shopping center to South Shore Drive.

The city and the CTA received a \$153-million grant from the Bush administration in 2008 to buy new accordion-style buses, set up bus-only lanes and build stations where bus riders would pay their fares before boarding.

But the grant was rescinded after City Hall botched part of the agreement requiring the city to raise downtown parking meter rates and develop a congestion-pricing

parking program aimed at reducing the number of automobiles in the downtown.

Jon Hilkevitch

Groundbreaking set for city's controversial rail project

Posted: Feb 12, 2011 1:27 AM CST Updated: Feb 12, 2011 2:05 PM CST

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - Honolulu Mayor Peter Carlisle has given the green light for a ceremonial groundbreaking for the city's controversial rail transit project.

The ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, February 22, at the Kualakai Parkway, also known as the North-South Road, in Kapolei.

"This is a time to celebrate," Carlisle said in the announcement.

The \$5.5 billion project is planned to encompass 20 miles per elevated rail, connecting Kapolei with Ala Moana Center.

"The city will be doing everything they can to not disrupt the traffic," said city Managing Director Douglas Chin. "If anything, we're hoping that eventually this rail project is going to significantly improve or help neighborhoods out there that really struggle with traffic congestion." Chin said even after the groundbreaking, there won't appear to be any visible construction activity until April, when heavy equipment will move in. Construction will be done on the rail project's first phase, which will run from Kapolei to Pearl City.

The city said the project will create thousands of jobs over the ten years it will take to complete.

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Travelogue: New SEPTA payment system good news

Published: Sunday, February 06, 2011

When SEPTA announced it was going to implement a new payment system for its regional rail, trolley and bus system last week, there's no doubt that it was good news. To have the ability to use a bank card, Smart Card, mobile device or other technology to buy tickets is a big step in the right direction.

We are a society that thrives on and expects convenience, sometimes that's good, sometimes not. But in this case, it's very good. The move away from things such as tokens and paper transfers will make it easier for passengers to get tickets when they want to get them. It will also save them time when it comes to making purchases.

Just how good the news is though, remains to be seen. It doesn't have to do with money, as SEPTA is using \$175 million in funding in a loan agreement from the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation regional center for the Smart Card project. It has to do with implementing the system, which will take place over the next three years.

"We're excited about the new payment technology in general, although we have disagreements on its implementation on the regional rail side," said Andy Sharpe, the communications director for the Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers.

The biggest contention is the potential of having solely one-way fares. This means there would be no cost to take the train into the city, but then it would be a double-fare to take it out of the city.

"Currently, none of SEPTA's proposals for regional rail are set in stone, which includes one-way fares," said Sharpe, a Glenolden resident. "The DVARP is very skeptical about one-way fares, since it leads to the distinct possibility that riders will ride regional rail into the city, but use another mode to get back. This is not as likely in Delco as in other areas (especially in the city) because it would require multiple rides to return in many instances."

While the new payment technology qualifies as a large issue for SEPTA and its riders, there are other issues that the DVARP would like to see solved, even though it knows SEPTA getting government funding to do so would help.

One issue is the cleanliness of its stations. While there have been positive steps made in many areas, the 69th Street Terminal in Upper Darby remains a sore spot.

"This is an area where SEPTA could work with the Upper Darby police department to combat crime and quality of life issues in and around the terminal," Sharpe said. "More importantly, we'd like to see state lawmakers give SEPTA a dedicated source of more funding."

RTA approves design of new streetcar line through the Marigny, Treme and St. Roch

Published: Tuesday, January 25, 2011, 10:53 AM Updated: Tuesday, January 25, 2011, 11:12 AM

By Martha Carr, The Times-Picayune

The Regional Transit Authority board voted 7-0 today to complete design work on a new streetcar line which would bring streetcar service to Faubourg Marigny, Treme and St. Roch.

The vote took place without discussion. The design is currently about 30 percent complete.

Plans call for the so-called French Quarter loop to travel along North Rampart and then St. Claude between Canal Street and Press Street, with a 1.2-mile spur on Elysian Fields Avenue that would connect with the Riverfront streetcar line at Esplanade Avenue.

The tracks would run in the street on both sides of the neutral ground.

With more than \$90 million in hand to build it, RTA executives are optimistic they can begin construction by midsummer of next year and debut the new line in three years.

Detroit light rail plan buoyed by \$25M grant

By TODD SPANGLER
DETROITFREE PRESS WASHINGTON STAFF

WASHINGTON – A grant agreement signed by federal officials, the city of Detroit and the Michigan Department of Transportation should clear the way for \$25 million to be spent on a 3.4-mile, 12-station light rail line connecting downtown Detroit to Grand Boulevard in New Center.

Federal Transit Administration officials announced Thursday they had signed the grant agreement which will help create the initial phase of the proposed Woodward Avenue Light Rail project in Detroit. The funding from the federal stimulus bill was granted last August, when federal officials committed to paying for an environmental impact study of the project, a key hurdle that must be crossed.

A private group of backers including Roger Penske, Mike and Marian Ilitch, Dan Gilbert, Peter Karmanos and others, had arranged for about \$125 million in private funding for the rail line, which could eventually extend all the way from Hart Plaza to Eight Mile near the state fairgrounds, a total of 9.3 miles.

"Building this light rail system will create jobs for this great American city, and it will stimulate long-term economic growth by attracting investment to downtown Detroit and the New Center area," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

Charlotte streetcar a year behind schedule

Charlotte Business Journal - by Erik Spanberg

Date: Thursday, January 20, 2011, 3:30pm EST

Streetcar fans will be waiting a year longer than expected to take their first ride on the Charlotte line.

John Mrzygod, the city of Charlotte's streetcar project manager, said Thursday that delays in receiving the

federal funding awarded last summer are expected to push the opening to 2015 for the line's initial \$37 million, 1.5-mile stretch. The city won a \$25 million federal streetcar grant in July and pledged to invest \$12 million in local money to pay for the 1.5-mile path along Elizabeth Avenue, between Presbyterian Hospital and the NBA arena.

The city anticipated opening the first stretch in 2014. Instead, money from the federal grant won't be available until this summer, Mrzygod said.

Replica trolleys will be used on the first streetcar segment. Funding for the rest of the 10-mile, \$500 million streetcar line remains unresolved. Budget constraints led Charlotte Area Transit System to defer plans last fall for additional segments.

Mrzygod offered the trolley update at the same time that Charlotte transit leaders gathered to watch the debut of a new hybrid streetcar aimed at reducing energy consumption and saving on capital costs.

Kinkisharyo International, the Massachusetts-based subsidiary of a Japanese company, introduced its ameriTram streetcar uptown today on a section of track at the Ninth Street Station. Transit officials from Charlotte and elsewhere, as well as area political leaders, took test rides as Kinkisharyo executives touted the benefits of the cars.



Rainer Hombach, Kinkisharyo general manager, said Charlotte is the first of many U.S. test sites planned in the months ahead. Next up is Dallas, where the cars will run for several weeks. No passenger runs are expected any time soon. The general public can see the 115-person capacity streetcar and walk through it during an open house Friday between 9 a.m. and noon.

It could be a long time before the next-generation streetcars come to town again. CATS Chief Executive **Carolyn Flowers** and Mrzygod said the Kinkisharyo cars could be considered for later segments of the Charlotte streetcar. Still, with the first segment debuting

in 2015 and no firm plans beyond that, it could be many years before the city goes shopping for additional streetcars.

Streetcars typically cost \$4 million. No price has been set for the ameriTram, but transit experts expect it to be more expensive because of the enhanced technology it offers. Among the biggest benefits: A rechargeable battery life allows for reduced overhead lines, making it easier for the streetcars to move through congested and historic areas.

Kinkisharyo began testing the streetcar prototype here in December. The company expects to begin filling orders later this year. In Charlotte, the company paid for the entire streetcar testing costs.

Flowers, the CATS executive, came away impressed. "It's a nice, smooth ride," she said.

Royal Coach adds six new clean-technology 2011 MCI® E4500 coaches for corporate shuttle

SCHAUMBURG, IL — February 16, 2011 — Royal Coach Tours, San Jose, California, has become one of the first coach companies in the nation to start bringing its fleet up to 2010 EPA standards with the addition of six new 2011 MCI coaches with the latest in EPA-compliant engine technology. The new coaches will help the company accommodate its corporate shuttle contracts.



The new coaches feature upscale amenities, including black leather seating for 50. Riders have access to Wifi, power outlets and other options that keep them connected and productive while commuting.

The 2010-standard engines, which offer near-zero emissions and significant fuel savings over previous models, are just part of Royal's commitment to the environment. The company was one of the first coach companies in the country to start retrofitting its coaches with Diesel Particulate Filter technology, thanks to a grant.

The company has extended its green ambitions to its facility as well, with a water reclamation system that serves its bus wash, extensive use of biodegradable materials and an aggressive recycling policy.

Under the leadership of Sandy Allen, president, and her brother Dan Smith, vice president, the 51-year-old Royal Coach Tours, www.royal-coach.com, has grown to be one of the San Francisco area's leading coach companies. In addition to serving corporate clients, it offers traditional tours and charters with its fleet of full-size coaches, mini-coaches and specialty coaches.

Actively involved in promoting the industry, Royal Coach supports the Motorcoach Council and its Motorcoachified campaign, www.motorcoachcouncil.org, featuring the campaign's bumper decals on five of its coaches. "We've been successful in gaining more attention," said Sandy Allen.

"Royal Coach is making a difference in the way the public views motor coach travel," said Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president and chief customer officer. "Royal's standards are high, as are ours, both for service and eco-awareness. We're proud that our new, low-emissions coaches are helping to reduce California highway congestion and protect its air quality."

Maryland Transit Administration goes with 18 MCI® Commuter Coaches for new ICC toll road

SCHAUMBURG, IL — February 14, 2011 — To better serve commuters on its new ICC (Intercounty Connector), The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has taken delivery of 18 new MCI Commuter Coaches. Maryland's ICC is an 18.8-mile toll road linking I-270/I-370 in Montgomery County to I-95 and US 1 in Prince George's County.



MTA planned for bus transit to be implemented with the construction of ICC early on. "With the opening of the ICC, we saw substantial opportunities for developing high-quality express and local bus transit that links regional counties more efficiently and improves access

to BWI airport district, the area's business technology corridor and the Maryland BRAC facilities at Fort Meade and Bethesda," said Timothy Norris, commuter bus superintendent. Presented in two phases, the bus service plan for ICC includes two phase-one routes that are opening with the toll road's first-seven mile stretch. Phase two includes the addition of three more express bus routes and modifications to the first two routes upon the completion of the ICC expected by early 2012.

All 18 of the new commuter coaches will be assigned to the routes, which MTA manages through contracts with local independent operators.

The MCI Commuter Coach is based on the industry's best-selling D-Series model and comes with safety and performance features including an Amerex Fire Suppression system and passenger amenities including plush seating, individual parcel racks, and overhead reading lights and airflow controls. MTA's new coaches are equipped with wheelchair lifts and are powered by a Cummins engine and Allison Transmission, featuring clean-diesel engine technology that offers passengers an ecological benefit—the lowest carbon footprint of any mode of motorized transportation. MTA will also wrap the exterior of its new commuter coaches with an ICC logo decal.

MTA already has a fleet of 50 MCI Commuter Coaches on other routes. According to John Lanocha, chief mechanical officer, these will be painted and decaled to give the fleet a like-new look.

To learn more, please visit www.mta.maryland.gov.

Certified Transportation shows environmental, safety leadership with new 2011 MCI® J4500 with next-generation clean-diesel engine technology

SCHAUMBURG, IL — February 14, 2011 — Certified Transportation Services in Santa Ana, California, is one of the first to take delivery of a 2011 MCI J4500 coach powered by the next generation of clean-diesel engine technology that promises near-zero emissions. Certified's new J4500 model also features Electronic Stability Control, Amerex Fire Suppression System and a SmartWave® tire pressure monitoring system. The company opted for customized Amaya seating with three-point passenger seatbelts and a state-of-the-art entertainment system with six 15" LCD widescreen monitors.

"It's a beautiful coach," said David Gregory, president of the family-operated charter and school bus company, who personally picked up the coach from MCI's Winnipeg plant. "It has a good-looking interior, and customer acceptance has been great." Gregory said he added the three-point seatbelts due to customer

requests and to match his seatbelt-equipped school bus fleet. California law requires seatbelts in school buses.



Certified's new J4500 coach, featuring a 2010 EPA Cummins ISX 11.9L 425 hp engine paired with an Allison B500 transmission, also helps the company comply with the state's emission regulation. Cummins estimates the engine also offers up to five percent improved fuel efficiency compared to 2007 engines, depending on duty cycle. It's quieter, too.

Founded in 1990, Certified started with four school buses. Today, the company, led by Gregory, his wife, sons and daughters, operates a fleet of 14 motor coaches and 48 school buses from its Santa Ana and Escondido locations, and employs 80 people.

The Gregory name has been part of Southern California's transportation heritage since 1915. Gregory, the third generation in his family to work in the industry, got his start as a teenager working for his father, who began his bus career as driver for Pacific Electric, the front-runner in the Los Angeles transit system. Before that, in 1915, Gregory's grandfather ran a Model T Ford jitney bus around Hollywood. "It's a nice business, and I feel fortunate to have a fourth generation around me," said Gregory.

Starline wins UMA Green Highway Award

SCHAUMBURG, IL — January 31, 2011 — From its own fleet and facility practices to installing parking-lot charging ports for employees' electric cars, Seattle's Starline Luxury Coaches has stepped up its already strong commitment to the environment during the past year. Recognizing all of those qualities and more, the United Motorcoach Association recently awarded Starline CEO Gladys Gillis the prestigious Green Highway Award for her commitment to championing the ecological benefits of motor coach travel. Motor Coach Industries (MCI) established the Green Highway award in 2007, with the arrival clean-diesel engine technology. Nominations are submitted to UMA, and a panel of judges, representing the industry, evaluates entries

based on a number of criteria including an operator's environmental practices throughout the organization and in its marketing communications.



Starline's most visible green accomplishment has been its eco-trans.org website, which is dedicated to educating Starline employees and the traveling public on how motor coach travel is beneficial for the environment. But it has done even more behind the scenes.

With 22 coaches in a 54-vehicle fleet, Starline trains its drivers on fuel conservation, limits idling and employs rigorous recycling policies. The company uses event recorders and engine data to monitor its drivers' acceleration patterns, G-force and other data important to fuel conservation. Additionally, Starline continues to purchase newer coach models that feature clean-engine technology. Its five newest MCI J4500s use diesel particulate filters to substantially lower emissions, along with SmarTire® monitoring systems that allow the company to make sure that tires are inflated to pressures that aid in fuel conservation.

But the jewel in Starline's crown is its new facility. On a three-acre site, the new building, built using certified recycled steel, boasts many features necessary to qualify for LEED accreditation. Built to take advantage of passive solar power and maximize energy conservation, it has a state-of-the-art bus wash system that uses the building's recycled rain water collected in two 1,500-gallon tanks. The recycled water is used in other parts of the building as well, and motion detectors ensure lights are on when needed. Starline has even installed electric car-charging capabilities and created a company newsletter to keep the issue of recycling forefront in employees' minds.

Gillis says she was inspired by "The Weather Makers" by Tim Flannery, which urges action to alter patterns of energy use. Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president and chief customer officer and presenter of the award during Motorcoach Expo in Tampa, said, "Gladys is forward thinking and has always been supportive of MCI as we, too, move toward a greener future. We're pleased to have been a part of this awards ceremony, and Gladys is highly deserving of this honor."

Trans-Bridge Lines celebrates 70 years with new MCI® J4500 coach and planned events

SCHAUMBURG, IL — January 4, 2011 — Trans-Bridge Lines knows how to mark a milestone. In 2011, the Lehigh Valley charter, tour and scheduled-service operator will observe its 70th anniversary with a celebratory customer trip to Tennessee, a special event for employees, and plans for a new Park & Ride facility at its Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, location.



Trans-Bridge Lines' new MCI J4500 coach also reflects the company's achievement. It features a customized interior with upscale touches including laminated, enclosed parcel racks; plush leatherette seating by Amaya; three-point passenger seatbelts; power outlets; and an attention-getting shimmery gold-and-green exterior 3D decal. This delivery represents one of seven new MCI coaches Trans-Bridge added to its fleet in 2010.

"We're committed to keeping our fleet modernized," said Tom JeBran, president of Trans-Bridge, who, with his brother Jim JeBran, vice president, represents the third generation of family members to lead the company. "Our new J4500 has many extra features that make it a special coach for us. We plan to use it for our high-end tour and charter business."

Motor Coach Industries, the leading builder of intercity coaches in the U.S. and Canada, will showcase Trans-Bridge's new J4500 in its exhibit area at American Bus Association's Marketplace January 6 through January 9 in Philadelphia. ABA Marketplace brings together over 3,500 professionals in the motor coach, tourism and travel industry. Tom JeBran serves on the ABA's Board of Directors as Vice Chairman.

With a fleet of 75 vehicles including 69 motor coaches, most made by MCI, Trans-Bridge is one of the largest privately held operators in the country. In addition to tours and charters, Trans-Bridge runs a highly successful commuter service to several points in New York City, along with daily trips to nearby casinos and Atlantic City. It also serves customers with transportation to area airports and piers.

Trans-Bridge will mark its 70th-year by drawing up plans for a Park & Ride on its property to increase convenience and security for its riders. More officially, customers will help celebrate the company's anniversary during a special trip to Pigeon Forge, August 22 through August 26. The trip includes a tour of the Smoky Mountains, visits to area attractions and a dinner theater party hosted by JeBran family members.

Key contributors to the Trans-Bridge team, including Kirby Parnell and Frank Warga, and the rest of its 200 employees, will celebrate the company's anniversary with a special event this summer as well.

Founded in 1941 by A.J. Ferraro and family, the company first operated transit, charters and tours from a base in Port Colden, New Jersey. In 1981, Trans-Bridge Lines and Tri-City Coach Lines, a family-owned charter coach company based in Bethlehem, merged and moved to a new facility in Bethlehem's Lehigh Valley Industrial Park. Today, Trans-Bridge and its related Lehigh Valley Motocoach operate charters and scheduled service. Trans-Bridge Tours offers tours throughout the U.S. and Canada, along with air and cruise vacation packages.

Active in its community and within the industry, Trans-Bridge provides annual transportation to the Spirit of Lehigh Valley Christmas Eve Dinner for the less fortunate, serving and giving gifts to nearly 5,000 people since 1989. Trans-Bridge is a member of the ABA, IMG, Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association, and the Pennsylvania Bus Association, where Jim JeBran is chairman of its Board of Directors. To learn more, visit www.transbridgelines.com.

Rockland County Gives MCI First New York Hybrid Commuter Coach Order

SCHAUMBURG, IL — January 4, 2011 — The Rockland County Department of Public Transportation has added three new MCI hybrid Commuter Coaches to their regional fleet, marking Motor Coach Industries' (MCI) first hybrid order to New York State.



The new coaches will be taken by Rockland's Tappan ZExpress line. The transaction is part of a nine-MCI coach hybrid order by the New York State transit agency.

The new MCI hybrids are replacing older coaches in Rockland's fleet and are being purchased with ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds.

As more cities and counties battle to cut carbon-dioxide emissions, MCI offers transit agencies a green solution. MCI builds the only intercity ultra-low-sulfur diesel electric hybrid commuter coach. Based on the MCI® D4500 (45-foot) model, the high-capacity hybrid commuter coach comes equipped with a smaller clean-diesel Cummins engine and an Allison Electric Drive Propulsion System. The MCI hybrid is more fuel efficient and emits lower emissions than conventional clean-diesel coaches. With 57 forward-facing passenger seats, these coaches also allow transit agencies to move more passengers with only one driver while occupying only 45 feet of valuable curb space.

MCI's commuter coach model interior touches include plush seating, individual overhead LED reading lights and air flow controls as well as scenery-sized windows that provide touring-class comfort and views to everyday commutes.

The Tappan ZExpress coaches feature a Ricon wheelchair lift, a Sportworks bike rack, Talking Bus voice announcement system, and a Verint five-camera video system.

Adventure Bus Charters and Tours keeps up to date with two new MCI® J4500 coaches, digital amenities and social media

SCHAUMBURG, IL — December 28, 2010 —

Adventure Bus Charters and Tours, Sumiton, Alabama, is on a modern track. With a 27-year history, Adventure's latest endeavors include adding two new MCI J4500 coaches, equipping coaches with Wi-Fi connectivity and using Facebook to effectively promote tours and sell out seats.

"We see a bright future and thought that now would be a good time to add new coaches to our fleet," said Larry Cummings, vice president.

Cummings' father, Doyle, who founded the company with one coach in 1983, saw the two new J4500 coaches delivered before dying unexpectedly on October 3 at the age of 77. "My dad was happy to see that we were growing again," said Cummings, who now operates a fleet of 34 coaches. "My dad was in this business for 27,

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years and we did things the right way. He was larger than life, a great man and an inspiration in our family."



At Adventure, family members involved in the business include Larry's wife, Gail; son Adam; his sister and brother-in-law Stacy and Tom Payne; son-in-law Chris Swink; and his mother, Glenda, who at 74 still works daily. The 14 other employees who work in the office and in the shop are thought of as family as well. "It's a team effort. We have a low turnover rate," said Cummings. "If you want to work at Adventure, you have to be part of the family."

Cummings extended family extends to MCI. "MCI treats us like we're its number-one customer," said Cummings, who complimented MCI sales representative Glen Collins and Vice President Patricia Ziska for their dedication in providing "phenomenal" service support. "We're solid MCI customers."

Adventure's new MCI J4500 coaches come equipped with a clean-diesel Cummins engine and Allison B500 transmission along with the latest safety and performance features including Electronic Stability Control and a SmartWave® tire pressure monitoring system. Other standard features on the industry's best-selling J4500 coach include a patented spiral stairway, scenery-sized windows and tiered theatre seating, assuring better views for most, and a state-of-the-art entertainment system. Adventure has added Satellite TV and Wi-Fi connectivity.

To stay connected to its customers, Adventure uses Facebook effectively. "We didn't put out a tour catalog this year. Instead, we sent out postcards to draw people to the web and view us on the Internet. We cut costs and saved a tree or two. To learn more visit www.adventure-bus.com.