



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

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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.

• JULY/AUGUST MEETINGS

The July meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on July 1, 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 "Bus Companies in Transition" by member Dave Wilson.

In 1969 transit companies large and small were transitioning from private to public operation. During the summer of 1969 David Wilson traveled from Chicago to Philadelphia and back visiting transit properties, many of which were in the last days of private ownership.

The August meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on August 5, 2011. The program will be a slide presentation by Mike Mullenbach.

Metra CEO Alex Clifford says challenges such as the agency's deficit and the need for a strategic plan are keeping him busy.

Moving his family cross-country, dealing with a looming Metra deficit and possible fare hikes, coping with fallout from his disgraced predecessor, restoring morale and public confidence, handling terrorist threats, keeping trains running on time and house-hunting.

Alex Clifford can't multi-task fast enough, but he's trying. Metra's new chief executive officer is at 100 days since his hiring Feb. 1.

One of Clifford's greatest challenges is eliminating red ink resulting from skyrocketing diesel fuel costs.

"If fuel continues at the rate it is right now, we'll be \$24 million over budget at the end of the year," said Clifford, a

former top executive with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

On Friday, he's expected to ask the Metra board of directors to allow a special meeting to talk over the short-term budget crisis. The agency also has a structural budget dilemma. "For many years, we've been using capital money to fund the operating side. You can't keep doing that," Clifford said, adding that capital dollars are needed to maintain and repair the rail system.

Possible fare hikes, service reductions and internal cuts are all on the table, he said. "Anything I bring to the board will be a combination of things."

But if the agency did decide to raise fares, it does so at a time of public skepticism after revelations former CEO Phil Pagano misspent transportation funds to enrich his salary and those of a favored few and allowed other irregularities, such as rehiring people who had committed crimes, failing to file federal paperwork that's resulted in a \$90,000 fine, and running up pricey expense accounts.

Pagano killed himself a year ago amid an investigation that showed he'd pilfered at least \$475,000 in unauthorized vacation payouts.

Clifford, a former Marine, said he was shocked at the findings and Pagano's lavish use of the company credit card.

The Daily Herald scrutinized Pagano's credit card use in 2010 and found excesses such as \$654 for a steakhouse dinner, more than \$2,200 on florist bills ostensibly for funeral arrangements, a \$3,000 legislative reception in Springfield and \$193 at a golf course in Wisconsin, which he later repaid after it was questioned.

"It was horrible stuff. It was sickening," Clifford said, citing "upgrading tickets from standard coach to first class," and pricey dinners which probably included alcohol. "You cannot charge the public for your alcohol consumption."

Asked if any more skeletons are expected to tumble out of the closet, Clifford said: "I just don't know what is around the corner as we continue to dig deep into this organization. I can't say that we've found everything."

The Metra board has instituted some reforms like hiring an inspector general and adopting whistle-blower and anti-nepotism policies since the scandal.

Clifford said he's tightened controls over travel, so that a procurement department administrator books flights and hotels — not employees. "If a (conference) hotel is \$400 a room a night but up the street its \$200 a night, there's nothing wrong with employees walking up the street. We will not just let employees default to whatever hotel they want."

Clifford also changed the policy on using cabs. Employees are required to document taxi use and walk when it's a reasonable distance. "Before I got here, the agency just paid the bill," he said.

Personally, he's refused a company credit card.

After revelations a former executive tried to shake down producers of the movie "Source Code," filmed using Metra property, Clifford said he's warned employees about ethics violations and is reaching out to Los Angeles and New York transit agencies for their policies on dealing with production companies.

He also let a purchase option expire on a controversial property near McHenry County College that Pagano had backed for a station, saying the plan needs more study.

Previously, Clifford handled high-speed rail initiatives for the Los Angeles transportation authority. When it comes to megaprojects here, he wouldn't commit to a particular priority, instead saying the agency needs a strategic plan that spells out what's needed in order of importance.

The STAR line, a proposed suburb-to-suburb rail service; expansions on the SouthEast and Union Pacific Northwest lines; and upgrades on the Union Pacific West Line will be included in the plan, he said. Clifford also promised to hold hearings across the six-county area to see what riders think about Metra's future.

In the short term, Clifford said the agency has beefed up security after revelations following Osama bin Laden's death that commuter rail lines could be a terrorist target.

The agency also is evaluating bids to install Wi-Fi on cars, working to reduce pollution from diesel engines, and looking at a universal fare card with the CTA and Pace.

Metra, unlike the other agencies, is an open system where passengers can walk on trains without paying first and it has a distance-based fee system. But despite those differences, the universal fare card is a high priority, Clifford said.

He also promised an announcement soon on quiet cars where riders cannot use cell phones. A test program on the Rock Island line has been popular.

Since starting at Metra, Clifford's met with numerous community and transit leaders and employees.

"I'm a CEO who likes to be seen out on the lines," he said. "I'm trying to give folks an assurance I'm different from the previous administration and it's a new day."

"The overwhelming majority of people in this company are good people. They lived in a suppressed environment where an autocratic leader had to have everything run through him and control the flow of knowledge."

As a result, Metra has fallen behind and "they're champing at the bit to move this agency forward," he said. (Daily Herald)

Power struggle brewing over Metra board

By Marni Pyke Daily Herald 04/27/2011

The future of the Metra board of directors is in flux as state senators and county chairmen discuss their fate behind closed doors.

Since the suicide of former Executive Director Phil Pagano last spring during a financial misconduct probe, the agency has worked to get its house in order amid fallout from the scandal.

Officials hired a new CEO and instituted reforms, but several state senators say that's not enough and are pushing for all directors to step down.

That's touched off tension between legislators and some county chairmen who have the authority to appoint directors to Metra's 11-member board and are backing those representatives. The two sides met recently and talks are ongoing, but there's no resolution yet.

Board Chairman Carole Doris announced her resignation April 15. Lawmakers such as Sen. Terry Link, a Waukegan Democrat, contend the entire board needs to go.

"We need fresh faces in there," Link said. "I don't want to say it was one person's fault ... I don't want to point a finger. The only way to resolve it is to have a new board."

But DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin, a former Republican state senator, said he anticipates a more gradual transition on the Metra board that won't involve resignations en masse.

In addition to Doris, Metra Director Ed Paesel, representing south suburban Cook County, stepped down this month. Other directors are expected to leave this year, Cronin said. His appointment of businessman Paul Darley to fill Doris' spot was confirmed by the DuPage County Board Tuesday.

"Legislators are seeking new leadership on the board — it is happening," Cronin said. "A transition is under way. Reforms are happening."

That gradual approach won't satisfy lawmakers, such as Lake Forest Democrat Sen. Susan Garrett, who have been critical of Metra's handling of the crisis.

"The entire board should be reconstituted," she said.

The votes are there to pass the legislation in the Senate, Link said. But a proposal in the Illinois House requiring Metra board resignations, pitched by state Rep. Jack Franks, a Marengo Democrat, died in committee recently. Meanwhile, some Metra insiders are putting out feelers to a variety of candidates including former Regional Transportation Authority Chairman Thomas McCracken to see if there's any interest in the chairmanship but with no takers, one official said. Other names that have surfaced include current Metra directors Jim LaBelle and Arlene Mulder and former DuPage County Board Chairman Gayle Franzen.

Several Metra directors said it would be unproductive to end their terms.

"I almost view it as throwing the baby out with the bath water," said Director Caryl Van Overmeiren, of Geneva. "We've made major changes to improve what's going on at Metra."

Mulder, who also is mayor of Arlington Heights, said that "We're trying to right the wrong that occurred. Our mission is to get everything back in place. This is a top-notch organization and we're working hard to regain the respect we once had."

LaBelle, who is from Zion, acknowledged it's an uncertain time. But by May or June, "it will be resolved one way or the other," he said.

Republican state Sen. Kirk Dillard of Hinsdale said he didn't have a major problem with the Link legislation as long as a stellar Metra board of directors could be reappointed and it didn't take away appointing authority from county chairmen.

Metra directors are selected by collar county board chairmen, the Cook County chairman and suburban board members and mayor of Chicago.

"The current selection system assures an equal share of power," Dillard said.

Emanuel, Claypool should focus on improving CTA service, experts and riders say

May 11, 2011|By Jon Hilkevitch, TRIBUNE REPORTER

Mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel and the political reformer he selected to run the CTA, Forrest Claypool, are heavyweight policy wonks.

Yet they might best serve commuters by avoiding the pitfall of overthinking the exorbitantly expensive long-term challenges confronting mass transit and instead focusing their efforts and limited resources on improving service immediately, experts and users of the system said.

Safe, clean, on-time, courteous and efficient. That's the CTA's mandate, printed on the face of every Chicago Card that is tapped hundreds of thousands of times each day on the fare-payment pads on buses and rail station turnstiles.

But on a daily basis, CTA service is inconsistent, riders and experts said. Providing reliable transportation on buses and trains that don't break down regularly; making sure bus-stop times published on CTA route maps are executed as closely to the schedule as possible; and implementing a no-tolerance policy about lingering nasty odors in rail stations are a few of the basic requirements that generations of CTA customers have called for and CTA managers are still trying to achieve.

Claypool, a frequent rider on the Brown Line, said Wednesday that his first priority must be to get a handle on CTA finances and start plotting a strategy to get more money to improve the system's infrastructure.

"You can't continue to use capital money for operating expenses," Claypool said at CTA headquarters. The transit agency has shifted more than \$200 million in capital funds toward operating expenses in the last two years to cover a chronic budget hole. Meanwhile, the backlog of CTA facilities in poor shape is growing, officials said.

Claypool also cited the burden of repaying the state tens of millions of dollars borrowed to avoid a fare hike and to help keep CTA buses and trains running during the recession, when sales tax revenue relied on by Chicago-area mass transit agencies plummeted.

"There are some real financial challenges," Claypool said. "I think we have to focus on that first, and then if we get that right, other good things can come."

When he lifts his head from budget documents, one easy fix Claypool should make involves demanding that CTA service planners pay closer attention to shifts in neighborhood population, said Phyllis Palmer, a longtime South Side resident who depends on the CTA.

Palmer lives in the Golden Gates community near Altgeld Gardens and rides the No. 34 South Michigan bus almost from end to end, starting at 130th Street and getting off at the Red Line 95th Street terminal, where

she transfers to the train heading downtown. The bus is always overcrowded, and more service is needed, Palmer said. Like many South Siders, she endures some of the longest commutes in the city, often requiring several transfers to reach her destination.

"CTA reduced the number of buses when the Chicago Housing Authority buildings were emptied out," Palmer said. "But ridership increased as people relocated to new homes, and now you've got a serious jam with all the people and the baby strollers. It's a really easy fix if the CTA would look at it."

The opposite problem exists elsewhere on the CTA system. Too much service, apparent by the near-empty buses, is being run in some South and West Side neighborhoods where CTA scheduling has not caught up with the closing of factories and other businesses in recent years, said Adam Kerman, who heads a CTA watchdog group.

"The CTA never caught up with job transitions, keeping bus routes in place even after the market dried up," Kerman said. "They need to do a proper study of where people live versus where they work and then probably redesign a number of bus routes, especially the farther south you go."

Although Claypool will likely enter into tough negotiations with CTA unions about contract concessions and possibly grapple with a fare increase to balance next year's budget, these matters won't by themselves accomplish the goal of better service, experts said.

"The new CTA leadership must start thinking about the differences between transit as a basic service and what the discretionary 21st century transit rider wants: modern, clean, safe stations and rail cars," said Randy Blankenhorn, executive director of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. "Claypool's challenge will be maintaining and modernizing the aging system that must keep operating for the next 30 years, while attracting new riders with the same level of comfort and security they have in their automobiles."

Emanuel's No. 1 transit initiative — overhauling the Red Line and extending the south branch by 5 1/2 miles — will take years to fund, design and construct. Still, CTA customers have reason to hope for smoother rides soon. New rail cars will start arriving in the next year, enabling the CTA to retire trains that have been rattling along the tracks since the 1960s. In addition, the CTA is in the middle of replacing its aging 1,800-bus street fleet, which provides two-thirds of the 1.6 million rides daily on the CTA system.

The equipment purchases can serve as the foundation for measurable improvements, including launching the long-delayed test of a bus rapid-transit service to skirt rush-hour traffic congestion on major city arterial streets, the experts said. Technological enhancements, including

a more robust CTA Train Tracker system, will also be important, they said.

The CTA continues to be saddled with \$7 billion in capital improvement needs it cannot afford. But implementing relatively inexpensive solutions — including improving connections between CTA buses and trains or offering better and faster options for Metra riders who arrive at downtown commuter rail stations to travel the final mile — must get as much priority as working the political channels in Springfield and on Capitol Hill to line up funds for multibillion-dollar projects, the experts said.

"The best transportation planners are the people who use the system," said Jacquelyne Grimshaw, a longtime transportation expert who is a member of the CTA board and who served on Emanuel's transition committee for transportation and infrastructure. "Listening more to our riders is a great way to smooth out problems."

Grimshaw's advice to Claypool, 53, a former Cook County commissioner who the transit board approved 7-0 Wednesday to become CTA president, is to surround himself with proven experts who are free of bureaucratic baggage.

"With Claypool coming into his position not being a transportation expert, I would conduct a careful selection of staff, experts in everything from operations to finances," Grimshaw said. "Right now, there is a good staff at CTA. But he may want to have his own staff."

Even by administering CTA operations more strategically, there is no escaping the connection between the quality of service and the state of CTA infrastructure. It is particularly critical on the rail system, where tracks, viaducts and stations have far exceeded their projected service life, experts said.

"Part of the reliability issue relates to the aging infrastructure and the unmet capital needs," said Steve Schlickman, executive director of the Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "We are just moving slow zones around the rail system. We don't have the wherewithal to completely eliminate them."

Rebuilding deteriorating "L" lines, as Emanuel said he plans to do starting with the Red Line, cannot be postponed much longer, experts said. They agree with CTA officials' evaluation that the rail system is still safe to ride, although in some locations only because of slow zones and steel braces shoring up crumbling bridges that are 100 years old.

"In terms of capital improvements, renewing the Red Line's north and south branches and extending it to 130th Street are the most important things for Claypool to do," said Schlickman, a former director of the

Regional Transportation Authority. "But you are talking about billions of dollars in funding that are not there and little chance that either the federal or state governments will step up to the plate."

The CTA has presented several rough scenarios for rebuilding North Side rail stations and tracks, from north of Belmont through Evanston, at preliminary cost estimates ranging from about \$2 billion to more than \$4 billion. The proposed Red Line south extension, from 95th to 130th streets, and the construction of four new stations is estimated to cost at least \$1.4 billion.

Despite a strong move in the U.S. House to cut federal funding for mass transit in the next multiyear transportation spending bill, Emanuel, a former congressman and chief of staff to President Barack Obama, has said repeatedly he is confident about securing grants to push his key transit projects forward.

To help pay for such mega-projects, advisers on Emanuel's transition team have also talked about aggressively pursuing commercial and residential development along the "L" system on property the CTA or the city already owns.

"It has been paining me that the CTA is trying to sell surplus land we acquired around the Brown Line stations that were expanded (to accommodate longer trains), versus going into co-development with real estate investors to provide a long-term revenue stream for the CTA," Grimshaw said.

The CTA also must investigate opportunities for real estate development around bus rapid-transit stations when that system is built, she said.

The experts support creative efforts to finance transit operations, from cutting costs at the CTA to making motorists pay London-style "congestion fees" to drive into downtown during peak travel periods. But such strategies can go only so far, they said.

"Without decreasing transit service or increasing fares, what are the options to deliver service more effectively?" Schlickman said. "That's the first thing I suggest Claypool try to figure out."

"Go to 2040," a comprehensive regional plan issued late last year by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, offers the new mayor a road map to follow. The CMAP plan supports the CTA Red Line south extension, listing it as the most important major transit initiative. It also calls for increasing the 19-cents-per-gallon state gasoline tax by 8 cents in the short term, with annual increases later, to finance transportation projects.

The plan also recommended changes in the Federal Transit Administration's "new starts" program that funds major new transit projects. Older systems like the CTA

would have more latitude to use federal grants to fit specific maintenance and modernization needs that currently don't meet the rules of the existing grants.

"The way it is structured now, local problems have to fit into federal funding definitions and you have to chase the money," Blankenhorn said. "Why should money be made available strictly for streetcars or trolleys? The federal government needs to become a more flexible partner."

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Hybrid Buses Heading to Highland Park

Pace briefs Rep. Dold and Mayor Rotering on new green programs.

By Steve Sadin | Highland Park Patch | June 10, 2011

When the first two hybrid buses ordered by Pace roll off the assembly line in December, they will get sent to Highland Park.

"Your previous mayor (former Mayor Mike Belsky) said 'I want it, I want it, I want it,'" Pace Executive Director Thomas Ross said Tuesday to a group assembled at Highland Park's bus barn. "We were being responsive to the community."

Ross was briefing a group that included Rep. Robert Dold (R-Kenilworth) and current Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering on the status of the city's partnership with Pace.

The only place Pace houses its buses between Evanston and Waukegan is Highland Park's public works facility. The buses share space with snow removal equipment and city vehicles unrelated to police and fire.

Encouraging public transportation

The hybrid buses are just part of the efforts between various levels of government and Pace to encourage public transportation amongst high school students and suburban residents.

"The hybrid is a giant step toward making public transportation more green," Dold said. "This is a pilot program."

The hybrid's electric engine can be charged at the Highland Park facility, something Dold lauded for being energy efficient.

Highland Park has long been a leader on sustainability issues. It was one of the first communities to offer free recycling to its residents and pioneered commercial recycling. Rotering considers the use of hybrid buses a logical progression.

"This is a continuation of the initiatives we have been pushing in an effort to improve sustainability," Rotering said. "It's natural to move the effort into public transportation."

Niles Free Bus Might Not Be So Free

Posted: Wednesday, June 8, 2011 3:56 pm Journal Online



Niles village trustees could consider a new proposal to charge fares on the Niles Free Bus this summer sparked by changes to the RTA's senior free ride program enacted in February that will go in effect in September.

RTA officials are holding hearings this week on changes to the statewide senior free ride program that would allow only low-income seniors qualified for the state's circuit breaker program.

Hearings were held yesterday (Tuesday) in Arlington Hts., today (Wednesday) at the Howard Mohr Center in Forest Park at 4 p.m., and will be held at the Waukegan Public Library on Thursday, June 16 at 10:30 a.m., and at the Levy Senior Center in Evanston on Thursday, June 16 at 1:30 p.m.

Village Manager George Van Geem said Niles officials watched RTA legislation closely.

Village trustees slashed free bus funding in this year's village budget by \$60,000.

Because of cost sharing with Pace that cut equates to \$166,000 from the total bus budget. Plans were to cut routes or possibly charge a fare to make up the revenue.

One of the reservations in charging a fare discussed at budget hearings was that under the old law seniors would ride free, even if the village charged for service.

Van Geem said he did not know when the issue of route changes or fare increases would be on the agenda.

One of the other reservations to changing the Niles Free Bus structure are several proposed Arterial Rapid Transit express bus routes that rely on the free bus system as local feeders. Village officials have not

discussed possible fares on the free bus with Pace officials.

Near-west Suburban Area Bus Route Improvements

The following route improvements are effective on Sunday, June 12, 2011: 303, 305, 307, 308, 317, 318, 322 and 332.

The following route improvements are effective on Monday, June 13, 2011: 302, 304, 310, 315, 319, 320, 325 and 330.

Route 302 Most weekday trip times will change. On weekdays, mid-day frequency will improve from 60 minutes to 45 minutes. No change to Saturday service

Route 303 Weekday service on Route 303 will be combined with the current Route 325 service. Route 303 will operate between the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Transit Center and the CTA Blue Line Rosemont Station. New weekday span of service: 5 a.m. - 11 p.m. All weekday trip times will change. Trips will run 30 minutes apart during peak hours and 60 minutes apart during off-peak hours. Route 303 will have a new name: Route 303-Forest Park - Rosemont. No change to Saturday or Sunday service.

Route 304 Route 304 will operate between 7 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. All trip times on this route will change. Trips will run approximately 60 minutes apart. Route 304 will no longer operate between the CTA Pink Line 54th/Cermak Station and North Riverside Park Mall. In that portion of the Cermak Road corridor, riders can take Route 322 or CTA Route 21 from North Riverside Park Mall to connect to the CTA Pink Line 54th/Cermak Station. A new far-side bus stop for Routes 304 and 307 will be placed on the northeast corner of 26th/Harlem; the existing nearside bus stop for northbound Route 307 trips at 26th/Harlem will be eliminated. Route 304 will have a new name: North Riverside - La Grange.

Route 305 The weekday northbound trip that currently ends at Harlem/South Blvd at 12:16 p.m. will end at Harlem/North Blvd at 12:17 p.m. The weekday northbound trip that currently ends at Harlem/North Blvd at 3:57 p.m. will end at Harlem/South Blvd at 3:56 p.m. The weekday southbound trips that currently begin at Harlem/South Blvd at 12:30 p.m. and 3:55 p.m. will begin at Harlem/North Blvd 4 minutes earlier. The weekday southbound trip that currently departs from Harlem/North Blvd at 4:26 p.m. will depart from Harlem/South Blvd at 4:30 p.m. No change to Saturday or Sunday service.

Route 307 A new far-side bus stop for Routes 304 and 307 will be placed on the northeast corner of 26th/Harlem; the existing nearside bus stop for northbound Route 307 trips at 26th/Harlem will be eliminated.

Route 308 The eastbound weekday trips that arrive at the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Transit Center at 10:09 p.m. and 10:43 p.m. will no longer continue to Harlem/Lake upon request. No change to Saturday or Sunday service.

Route 310 Most weekday trip times will change. No change to Saturday service.

Route 315 Most weekday trip times will change. On weekdays, mid-day frequency will improve from 60 minutes to 45 minutes. No change to Saturday service.

Route 317/17 Most weekday trip times will change. However, CTA Route 17 remains unchanged. No change to Saturday or Sunday service.

Route 318 The weekday westbound trips that currently depart from the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Transit Center at 8:59 a.m., 9:29 a.m., 9:59 a.m., 10:29 a.m., 10:59 a.m., 11:59 a.m., 12:29 p.m., 12:59 p.m. will depart from the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Transit Center 3 minutes later and arrive at each subsequent time point 3 minutes later. The weekday westbound trip that departs from the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Transit Center at 1:59 p.m. will now depart from the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Transit Center at 2:01 p.m. and arrive at each subsequent time point 2 minutes later. No change to Saturday or Sunday service.

Route 319 The weekday eastbound trip that currently departs from Wolf/North at 7:24 a.m. will depart from Wolf/North at 7:26 a.m. and arrive at each subsequent time point 2 minutes later than it does now. No change to Saturday service.

Route 320 Service will now operate only between 6:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Wait times between trips will be between 30 - 60 minutes, depending on time of day and direction of travel. During off-peak times, riders can take the CTA Green or Blue Line and transfer to Routes 307, 311, 315 and CTA Route 91 for service in the Madison Street corridor.

Route 322 - ON WEEKDAYS - New weekday span of service 4:30 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. Most weekday trip times will change. When the CTA Route 21 is operating, Route 322 **will not operate** early morning and late evening trips between North Riverside Park Mall and the CTA Pink Line 54th/Cermak Station. Route 322 **will operate** between the North Riverside Park Mall and the CTA Pink Line 54th/Cermak Station at all other times. Weekday trips will run 15-20 minutes apart during peak times, 30 minutes apart during the mid-day and 60 minutes apart during the mid-late evening hours. Due to the discontinuation of Route 325, Route 322 trips will no longer enter the Broadview Village Square Shopping Center.

Route 322 - ON SATURDAYS - New Saturday span of service 5:30 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. Most Saturday trip times will change. The frequency and span of service on

Saturday will be increased between the CTA Pink Line 54th/Cermak Station and Yorktown Center. Saturday trips will run 30 minutes apart for most of the morning thru early evening hours and every 60 minutes apart during the mid-late evening hours. When the CTA Route 21 is operating, Route 322 **will not operate** early morning and late evening trips between North Riverside Park Mall and the CTA Pink Line 54th/Cermak Station. Route 322 **will operate** between the North Riverside Park Mall and the CTA Pink Line 54th/Cermak Station at all other times.

Route 322 - ON SUNDAYS - Most Sunday trip times will change. No change to the frequency and span of service on Sundays (7 a.m. - 10:45 p.m.).

Route 325 This route will be combined with Route 303; route name and number will be discontinued.

Route 330 The weekday northbound trip that currently departs from Harlem/Archer at 5:16 a.m. will depart from Harlem/Archer at 5:10 a.m. and arrive at each subsequent time point 6 minutes earlier than it does now. No change to Saturday service.

Route 332 Route 332 will no longer enter the Elmhurst Memorial Center for Health. Passengers must board and alight at the intersection of York/Harvard. Passenger and pedestrian amenities will be installed at York/Harvard. No change to Saturday or Sunday service.

CTA Takes Delivery of New Prototype 'L' Cars

UPDATED 06/09/11 8:11 a.m.

CHICAGO (CBS) — More new CTA 'L' cars are beginning to arrive.



Bruce Moffat photograph

As WBBM Newsradio 780's Bob Roberts reports, the CTA took delivery of two more new cars last week and Newsradio 780 has learned that delivery of additional cars will start in the coming week, even though Chicago

Transit Authority president Forrest Claypool says the cars have not been given final approval.

"I don't think (final approval will be) too much longer," he said. "A little bit more testing, we're doing some testing, we're checking out the elements, and so it's just part of the process, but we're getting close."

The prototypes that have been tested extensively across the CTA rapid transit system will be shipped back to manufacturer Bombardier's Plattsburgh, N.Y., production facility to get some tweaks and software upgrades to make them uniform with the rest of the 706-car order.

The two cars, delivered last week by over-the-road flatbed trucks to CTA Skokie Shops, were prototypes that had been held at the Bombardier factory since being built in 2009.

The delivery of the cars, numbered 5001 and 5002, allow the CTA to begin fielding two six-car trains of the new equipment, which have different propulsion systems from older cars and cannot run in the same train with them.

Claypool said CTA mechanical engineers assured him that most major problems have been addressed, and that mostly "minor issues" remained.

While the plan remains to replace the CTA's two oldest series of 'L' cars, produced in 1969-70 and 1976-78, Claypool is not yet ready to say how many of the CTA's 2600-series will remain when the deliveries are complete in about three years. He said more capacity is needed at peak periods, but said it is not as simple as assigning more cars to the Red, Blue and Brown Lines.

He said that slow zones prevent the CTA from scheduling at optimum capacity, especially on the Red Line. CTA is seeking federal funding to assist with Red and Purple Line reconstruction. Concrete bridges on the portions of the Purple Line and the Red Line's Howard leg date from as early as 1910, many are crumbling and capital reconstruction money is being sought from the federal government.

"Everything is related to everything else," he said.

Claypool said the need for years to take money from the CTA's capital budget to pay operating expenses has not helped. The Sept. 1 limitations on free rides for seniors to those who are low-income are expected to generate only \$7-10 million a year in additional revenues.

The CTA's board also has approved names for three 'L' stations, two of which are new. The new infill station on the Skokie Swift at Oakton Street will bear the name Oakton-Skokie, while the existing terminal will become Dempster-Skokie, to differentiate it from the Dempster station on the Purple Line. The Oakton-Skokie station is expected to open by year's end.

The CTA also will add a stop at Morgan and Lake Streets on the Green Line. It will be named simply "Morgan." It is expected to open in the spring of 2012.

Twin Cities transit agencies add MCI® Commuter Coaches

SCHAUMBURG, IL — May 17, 2011 — Accommodating growing ridership and keeping a pace with equipment-replacement strategies in Minnesota's Twin Cities, Prior Lake and Maple Grove transit agencies have added MCI Commuter Coaches to their fleets.



The two agencies, under the funding and coordination of Metropolitan Council Transit, serve commuters to and from Minneapolis. Prior Lake took delivery of one MCI Commuter Coach. Maple Grove Transit took delivery of three MCI Commuter Coaches last year and four more in March and has plans to add more to its fleet.

Based on the all-time best-selling MCI D-Series, both agencies' coaches are equipped with Cummins '07 ISM engines and Allison B500 transmissions, along with Ricon wheelchair lifts, six-camera surveillance systems and Seimens Continental AVL voice annunciation/APC system. The Maple Grove coaches have six outlets for passenger electronics and laptops, and additionally offer provisions for Sportworks bicycle racks. These are the agency's first MCIs.

The Maple Grove MCIs replace shorter, 45-seat transit buses by another maker. The agency follows a 12-year replacement model.

"Most of our buses are full and ridership is increasing," said Mike Opatz, transit administrator for Maple Grove, which operates commuter routes that average about 20 miles. Most commutes take about half an hour. "It wasn't so much about the coaches' style, but people love the look, the ride and the extra space. People who were standing might now have a seat."

LADOT Orders 84 MCI® Commuter Coaches Powered by CNG

First deliveries will replace older diesel buses on Commuter Express routes

SCHAUMBURG, IL — May 25, 2011 — The City of Los Angeles, the city with the longest and most successful programs for combating air pollution, will get a new ally in its continuing efforts to improve air quality: Motor Coach Industries' (MCI) compressed natural gas powered, clean air commuter coaches.



On May 19, 2011, The City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) signed a contract for 84 MCI Commuter Coaches powered by CNG. Each 40-foot coach will be wheelchair-lift equipped and feature MCI's Cummins ISL G 8.9 liter, 320hp engine, meeting 2010 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and California's California Air Resource Board (CARB) standards.

The CNG coaches will be the first MCI models in LADOT's fleet, and the order includes an option for 11 additional coaches after deliveries begin in the third quarter. "It's a tremendous honor for MCI to join LADOT's fleet and we're particularly glad to make our debut with the nation's only CNG over-the-road highway coach that's Buy America compliant and Altoona-tested," said Michael Melaniphy, Vice President of MCI's Public Sector Division. "We're pleased to bring our model to a city that's had a green transportation record longer than any other."

Each of the new LADOT coaches will seat 49 passengers on the City's Commuter Express system that connects outlying suburban districts with Downtown Los Angeles and other employment centers including Century City, Westwood, LAX, El Segundo, Pasadena, Glendale, Burbank and Encino.

Comfortable, clean-air coaches for longer L.A. commute

The MCI CNG-equipped Commuter Coaches will replace a majority of the 94 older, heavy-duty diesel buses that now carry Commuter Express passengers. Features on the new MCI Commuter Coaches include plush

upholstered forward facing seats, individual overhead reading lights and personal airflow controls and performance features such as an advanced multiplexing system for simplified diagnostics, a driver-centric dash for easy interfacing and a SmartWave® tire pressure monitoring system.

LADOT Interim General Manager Amir Sedadi said, "Commuter Express riders are very loyal to their service, as many have been with us for more than half a decade. We are happy to offer these new state-of-the-art coaches. The City is proud to work with MCI to offer clean air commuter bus service to our residents, in support of our Mayor's goal to make Los Angeles the largest 'Green' city in America."

LADOT is using Federal Transit Administration grants for 70 percent of the funding for the replacement of its old Commuter Express buses, which are among LADOT's oldest equipment on the road. The total value of the 84 MCI bus order is \$59,220,000.

"One fully occupied 40-foot MCI coach takes 49 passenger cars off the road, and the MCI Commuter coach provides a lower carbon foot print per passenger mile than any other mode of transportation," said Tom Wagner, director of MCI's Public Sector Division. MCI first launched a CNG model more than 11 years ago. Today, there are 76 CNG MCI coaches in operation with New Jersey Transit. MCI also offers the Commuter Coach model in clean-diesel and Hybrid configurations and estimates there are a total of 4,000 MCI coaches in operations with commuter transit agencies in major cities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

LADOT launched its Commuter Express program in 1985, beginning with a single route carrying passengers between a city-leased park and ride lot in Encino and downtown Los Angeles. Today, the service has 13 routes operating throughout Los Angeles County during the weekday morning and afternoon peak commuting hours. The service has an annual ridership of more than two million with an estimated daily ridership of 8,400. LADOT currently operates the second largest fleet in Los Angeles County next to the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA). LADOT's transit fleet consists of nearly 400 vehicles, which operate over 800,000 revenue hours and serve approximately 30 million passenger boardings per year.

Land /Jet continues the family transportation tradition by putting two new MCI® D4505s into its tour and charter service

SCHAUMBURG, IL — April 28, 2011 — As a third-generation charter and tour company, Waterbury, Connecticut-based Land/Jet stays with what it knows best. And to Vice President Tim Brady, that's motor coach models made by Motor Coach Industries.



The company just added two new luxury MCI D4505s to its lineup, the latest models in its all-MCI coach fleet. Land/Jet, which operates charter tours throughout the nation and specializes in Connecticut casino transport to the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville and the Foxwoods Resort and Casino in Mashantucket, operates a 17-MCI coach luxury fleet. The Bradys' latest D4505s feature three-point seatbelts, a full sound system, Wi-Fi and a Cummins ISM 10.8-liter engine, featuring the latest clean diesel engine technology.

"We're a third-generation bus company. It's in the blood. My father was in it, and my grandfather started the Flying Eagle White Way Line in Danbury," explains Brady. "We went into the bus brokerage business for a brief time in the 1970s and came back in 1983 after President Reagan deregulated the transportation industry, and became an MCI customer exclusively."

Brady's father Joseph founded the Travel Center, the company's charter and tour-planning arm, in 1955. Land/Jet operates in tandem with the Travel Center's operations at its Waterbury headquarters at the city's main bus terminal. The company's history states that when Brady and his three other brothers founded Land/Jet, they originally worked with top competitors using the terminal to handle early spillover of jobs and customers. The third-generation of Brady coach operators used that experience to develop a best practices business philosophy they have followed for the past 28 years.

U.S. orders northern Michigan bus Tour Company to halt operations

David Shepardson/ Detroit News Washington Bureau

Washington— The U.S. Transportation Department today ordered a northern Michigan tour bus company to immediately halt operations after a police officer discovered six passengers in the luggage compartment.

Gladwin-based Haines Tours was ordered to stop operations after the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration declared the carrier an "imminent hazard" to public safety for its practice of transporting

passengers in the motorcoach's cargo compartment and issued a seven-page order halting operations.

"People's lives were needlessly placed at risk," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood in a statement. "Safety is everyone's responsibility and it begins with practicing common sense. That means not putting human beings in cargo holds."

On May 27, a Haines Tour motorcoach driven by Roger Haines, traveling from Roscommon to Clyde, Ohio, was inspected by the Ohio State Highway Patrol in Lake Township. The officer discovered that six of the 62 passengers were riding in the luggage compartment of the motorcoach, which also contained unsecured baggage. The Transportation Department said this wasn't the first time.

Last August, Haines Tours was cited for a similar illegal practice — utilizing the motorcoach's luggage compartment as an unauthorized sleeper berth for drivers.

"Despite being warned in August 2010 that it cannot transport people in the luggage compartment of its buses in violation of federal regulations, it (Haines Tours) continues to place people in the luggage compartment," the Out-of-Service order states. Continuing, it states, "(t)his Imminent Hazard Order is necessary to put an immediate stop to this highly dangerous practice."

This is the second "imminent hazard" out-of-service order issued by FMCSA to a passenger carrier company in the past 48 hours. On June 9, JCT Motor Coach, Inc., and its affiliated company, JT's Travel & Charter, Inc., of Atlanta, Ga., were ordered to stop operating passenger service for attempting to evade a previous out-of-service order by operating under a different name.

On June 3, FMCSA issued a cease-and-desist order against Sky Express, Inc., of Charlotte, N.C., after finding the company was attempting to operate and sell tickets under a different name, including 108 Tours and 108 Bus.

Haines Tours can operate again if it meets requirements set by the government. It must identify the cause of the issue, develop a plan to ensure it doesn't happen again and must certify to federal officials it will comply with federal rules governing bus tours.

The company's website shows several trips planned for this summer, including outings to Mackinac Island, Bay City, Novi, Detroit, the Upper Peninsula, Battle Creek and Ohio. The tour company didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

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AG's office: MBTA pass scam totaled \$4 million

By Jesse Roman Staff Writer Gloucester Times May 22, 2011

The two people at the center of what's believed to be the biggest fare-evasion scheme in Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority history have pleaded not guilty to larceny and conspiracy charges in Salem District Court.

Judge Michael Laurantano set bail Friday for Townes and Escobar at \$250,000 and \$100,000, respectively.

Townes — who was a supervisor at Cubic Transportation Systems Inc., the Beverly company contracted to produce and distribute monthly MBTA transit passes — allegedly printed upwards of 20,000 fraudulent passes worth an estimated \$4 million and sold them directly to MBTA passengers, pocketing the proceeds, according to assistant Attorney General Gina Masotta.

Escobar, who is listed at the same Revere address as Townes but recently moved out, was not an employee at Cubic, but allegedly helped Townes sell the so-called "ghost passes" after he printed them, the prosecutor said.

Townes began printing the fraudulent transit passes in November 2007, and a warrant search of his Revere home "recovered multiple boxes filled with thousands of MBTA tickets," Masotta said.

There were also two large bags filled with shredded passes, which Masotta said was an attempt to "destroy evidence" once the couple caught wind that police were onto their alleged scheme.

By January 2010, police believe Townes was printing more than 500 of the fraudulent passes per month.

Deals through Craigslist

The passes were real MBTA transit tickets, printed using the same machine at Cubic's Beverly office that's used to print legitimate monthly commuter rail and subway passes. There was, however, one important catch.

Normally, when a pass is printed, it's automatically logged into an MBTA database that keeps track of the number of passes produced and the revenue generated for the MBTA. Townes, however, allegedly figured out a way to manipulate the machine so that he could print fare passes and activate them without it being logged into the database, Masotta said.

He and Escobar then allegedly sold the "ghost passes" by setting up deals with MBTA passengers on Craigslist and other websites, under the pseudonyms Lisa and Rich Rohan.

The passes, worth anywhere from \$59 to \$265 depending on the distance the pass allowed the passenger to travel, were sold at small discounts.

Townes and Escobar made transactions with customers in person and through the mail by money order, prosecutors said. At least two passengers who had purchased the fraudulent passes in person identified Escobar in a police lineup.

It is unclear how many, if any, of the passes made their way to MBTA rail commuters in Gloucester or elsewhere on Cape Ann.

From December 2009 through March 2011, about 225 money orders totaling approximately \$48,000 were mailed to a Beverly post-office box rented to both Townes and Escobar, police said.

The couple had 45 different bank accounts to stash their proceeds; 23 of those accounts remain open with total assets of about \$50,000, the prosecutor said. That leaves quite a bit of money unaccounted for, she said.

'Significant amount of cash'

"We believe they have access to a significant amount of cash, and pose a serious flight risk," Masotta said in making the case Friday for Judge Laurantano to impose a substantial bail amount.

Asked after the arraignment if Townes would be able to post the \$250,000 bail, his attorney William O'Hare said it's unlikely. He is being held at Middleton Jail, while Escobar is being held at a women's prison in Framingham.

Masotta said both Townes and Escobar were living well with the proceeds they made from the alleged scheme. Townes paid off a property in Lawrence with the money and also used it to help him buy property in Revere, she said.

"There were also multiple cars, trips and jewelry, all paid for from the proceeds of the illegal sales," Masotta said.

In interviews with police, Townes estimated his earnings from the alleged plot at \$800,000. Escobar was said to have made between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per month from the scheme, but Masotta did not say how much in total she allegedly made.

Others likely involved?

The scheme was so large, lawyers on both sides said Escobar and Townes likely didn't act alone.

"This is a young woman who was caught up in something much bigger than herself," said James Craig, Escobar's court-appointed attorney. "It certainly appears there are others involved in this alleged scheme."

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A number of additional employees (at Cubic) had access to the (MBTA pass printing) machine," O'Hare said. "Interviews with multiple pass riders revealed that they never spoke to either of the two individuals before you here in court."

During interviews with police, Townes named several other people he alleges were involved in the scheme, Masotta said.

No other arrests in the case have been made yet, but the attorney general's office said the case remains under investigation.

In response to the arrest, the MBTA announced last week that it would terminate its contract with Cubic and has moved the transit pass operations "in-house for the time being to MBTA offices," according to Joe Pesaturo, an MBTA spokesman.

"Cubic employees, under the supervision of MBTA staff, continue to handle orders for fare passes, but the machines used for printing CharlieTickets have been removed from the Beverly facility," Pesaturo said.

MBTA seeks compensation

The MBTA sent a letter to Cubic Vice President James Edwards on Thursday, alleging "a material breach of its obligations" under the contract. Cubic has 30 days to try and rectify the problem, however, due to the serious nature of the offense, the MBTA "reserves the right to deem any offer to cure futile," the letter says. The contract, held since 2009, paid Cubic \$2.3 million this fiscal year, which ends June 30, Pesaturo said.

MBTA officials, including General Manager Richard Davey, have said they expect Cubic to fully compensate MBTA for the millions of dollars it lost in the alleged scheme.

Cubic Transportation Systems moved into its Beverly office in 2009, taking over the space from the company that had previously held the MBTA contract. The facility includes a call center to handle customer inquiries and a fulfillment center that produces and mails MBTA passes ordered online or over the phone. About a dozen employees work at the office, according to Diana Pisciotta, a spokesperson for the company.

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