



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

SEPT-OCT 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](http://www.osabus.org)". At [www.osabus.org](http://www.osabus.org) we will be posting upcoming fan trips and meetings information, as well as membership information.

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

## • SEPT-OCT MEETINGS

**The September meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on September 2, 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 October meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on October 7, 2011. The program will be at the CTA Maintenance Training Center located at 1120 East 89<sup>th</sup> Street at 3:00 pm. Map and further information is enclosed in this newsletter.

## CTA Welcomes New Tenants to Red, Blue, Brown and Orange Lines

8/10/2011

The Chicago Transit Board today approved ten leases for tenants to occupy space on the Red, Blue, Brown and Orange lines. The ten new contracts bring the total number of leased spaces to 84.

"This is the third consecutive month CTA has leased concession space at rail stations," CTA President Forrest Claypool said. "The new coffee and food shops further enhance the customer experience and at the same time provide a reliable source of income for CTA for the next 10 years."

CTA has entered into agreements which will generate a total of more than \$1.6 million for the life of the contracts. Four Dunkin' Donuts shops will be opened by First Equity LLC at the Fullerton, Lake and the Jackson stations on the Red Line and the Roosevelt station on the Orange Line. First Equity LLC will also open "Millennium Dogs"—a quick

serve food restaurant—at the Jefferson Park Blue Line station and two convenience stores, one each at the Howard and Lake Red Line stations.

Lease agreements for convenience stores at the Wellington and Montrose stations on the Brown Line and the Irving Park station on the Blue Line also were approved with Rafi M. Skaikh, Habib Siddqi, and Mina Builders respectively.

Concession spaces are advertised with Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) and reflect market value for similar properties in each respective area. CTA amended its purchase and sales regulations in March in order to allow JLL to broker leases of available retail concession properties on the open market. Information on available retail concession spaces can be obtained at [ctarealestate.com](http://ctarealestate.com).

## Quinn gives buses OK to ride I-55 shoulders

### Program expected to cut commute time downtown

by Richard Wronski, Tribune reporter  
August 12, 2011

In a first for the Chicago area, express buses that can drive on expressway shoulders to maneuver around rush-hour congestion are scheduled to roll in November, Pace and Illinois Department of Transportation officials said Thursday.

Under a federally funded pilot program, buses on two existing Pace routes operating between the southwest suburbs and downtown Chicago and the West Side's Illinois Medical District will be allowed to use the shoulders of the Stevenson Expressway (Interstate Highway 55).

As first detailed in the Tribune on Feb. 18, the program marks the introduction of the "bus-on-shoulder" concept in Chicago. Areas that already permit bus-only shoulder riding include Minneapolis-St. Paul, Miami-Dade County and Toronto.

Gov. Pat Quinn on Thursday signed legislation amending the state vehicle code to allow the buses to ride the shoulders. Nonemergency vehicles are prohibited from doing so.



"This innovative transportation pilot program will use existing resources to benefit both drivers and transit riders," Quinn said in a statement.

When traffic is flowing freely, the buses will use the regular lanes of the expressway, as they now do. When there is congestion, however, the buses will be allowed to use the left shoulders to pass slowed or stopped traffic.

If a disabled car or other obstruction is on the shoulder, buses will slow down, merge back into traffic, then return to the shoulder after passing the car or obstruction, officials said.

Buses will not be able to use the Stevenson's shoulder east of Kedzie Avenue because it is too narrow to safely accommodate them, according to IDOT.

The expressway shoulders will be available only during rush hours when traffic is moving slower than 35 mph. Buses will be prohibited from traveling more than 15 mph over the top traffic speed in the main lanes, and never faster than 35 mph.

"Buses won't be zipping down the shoulders at 70 mph," said Rocky Donahue, Pace's deputy executive director.

The express buses are expected to reduce travel times through the busy I-55 corridor, improve the reliability of bus schedules and help the environment by encouraging more motorists to use mass transit, officials said.

Pace bus routes 755 and 855 already operate on the I-55 corridor between Plainfield, Bolingbrook, Romeoville, Burr Ridge and the medical district and downtown Chicago.

IDOT has been upgrading the expressway shoulders since spring and is adding signs and lane markings.

The bus-route costs are covered by a \$1.5 million federal grant for projects that improve air quality.

Route 855 averages about 269 riders per day, according to Pace, while Route 755 averages only about 37 riders per day.

Pace hopes that the project will attract commuters who will choose to ride the bus rather than drive the expressway.

"Our hope is (bus-on-shoulder service) catches on, so we'll see growth and get some additional routes as well," Donahue said.

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## **Pace changes policy; will pick up bus passengers at posted stops only**

BY JOHN ROSZKOWSKI [jroszkowski@pioneerlocal.com](mailto:jroszkowski@pioneerlocal.com)  
August 1, 2011 9:50PM

A popular Pace bus route that runs through parts of Mundelein, Libertyville and Vernon Hills will be changing to a posted-stops-only operation beginning this month.

Pace spokesman Patrick Wilmot said the service change will apply to Pace Route 572, which runs from the Westfield Hawthorn Shopping Center in Vernon Hills to Waukegan and includes stops in the Libertyville, Mundelein, Carmel High School, the College of Lake County in Grayslake, and Six Flags Great America in Gurnee.

Previously, Route 572 used a "flag stop" operation, where passengers could board the bus at any intersection along the route where the driver deemed it safe to do so by flagging down the driver. Passengers were encouraged to wait for the bus at bus stop signs but were not required to do so. Under the new posted stops only operation, buses will only stop at posted Pace bus stop signs along the route.

Wilmot said Pace is making the change to reduce delays along the route and improve on-time performance of their buses.

"By establishing a system of posted stops, we believe we can reduce travel times and increase on-time performance," he said. "Those two things combined will go a long way to increasing customer satisfaction."

Wilmot said Pace bus stops will be designated with signs that are reasonably spaced along the route so customers do not have to walk long distances. In Libertyville, there are several stops at different intersections along Milwaukee Avenue as well as a few stops along Winchester and Butterfield roads and Route 176. There also are bus stops along U.S. Route 45 in Mundelein and Libertyville and on Hawley Street in Mundelein.

Wilmot said Pace has not yet determined an exact date for the change but expects it will happen sometime in August. He said Pace will post a complete list of the bus stop locations on its Web site at [www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com).

Libertyville has already posted a map of the posted stops in the village on its Web site. "We want to make sure anybody who uses that route will have that information," said Libertyville's Assistant Village Administrator Kelly Amidei.

Amidei said the village just heard about the change a couple weeks ago and so far she is not aware of any comments about it from residents.

"There may be some people that are upset with it but it looks like the route incorporates plenty of stops throughout the community so I don't think it will be a problem," she said.



Mundelein's Assistant Village Administrator Mike Flynn said he has seen more of the new posted bus stop signs on Hawley Street and he thinks switching to a posted-stop only system makes sense.

"I think it's safer to have specifically designed stopping zones," he said. "It's got to be much more efficient."

This is not the first change Pace has made to Route 572 in the past year. In December, Pace eliminated a portion of the south end of the route in the Westmoreland-Oakwood area of Vernon Hills due to limited ridership and poor on-time performance.

## **Pace combines Elgin to Schaumburg bus routes**

As part of an ongoing effort to improve efficiency and reduce duplicative service, Pace announced it is combining two Northwest suburban bus routes.

Effective Monday, Aug. 22, travel options for riders in Elgin, Streamwood, Hanover Park, Hoffman Estates and Schaumburg will expand with the combination of Route 544 Chicago Street in Elgin with Route 554 Elgin-Woodfield.

"All the communities wrote letters of support because we really wanted this," Hanover Park Mayor Rod Craig said.

Pace staff found that 92 percent of Route 544 riders currently are getting on and off the bus along portions of Elgin's Chicago Avenue that are overlapped by Route 554.

At a May hearing Pace held in Elgin, Craig said a few riders were upset because the elimination of Route 544 means service to the Bode and Longford Road area will end.

However, the general response was overwhelmingly positive, he said, because buses will travel Route 554 far more frequently.

Once the new schedule goes into effect, a bus will run every 30 minutes weekday morning and evening rush hours and every 65 to 75 minutes midday. Saturday service will run every 70 minutes during the day.

Currently, Route 554 has just four buses that travel from Pace's Elgin Transportation Center east to the Northwest Transportation Center in Schaumburg in the morning, and five westbound buses in the afternoon. There is no Saturday service.

"That's the only bus service we have in the area right now," Craig said. "It's not enough."

Major stops along Route 554 will include the Elgin and Hanover Park Metra stations, Woodfield Shopping Center, Target, Jewel-Osco, St. Alexius Medical Center,

Streamwood Library and Pace transportation centers in Elgin and Schaumburg.

Connections can be made to O'Hare International Airport, Harper College, Forest Park and Randhurst Mall.

Craig expects ridership will increase to the point where the route will be self-sustaining, and communities like Hanover Park will no longer have to pay more than \$20,000 annually to keep it going.

For more information, visit [pacebus.com](http://pacebus.com) or call (847) 364-7223.

## **Next phase of Naperville Metra project begins Monday**

On Monday, August 22, work on the second phase of the Naperville Metra Station Platform Improvement Project is scheduled to be completed, and work on the third phase of the project is anticipated to begin.

Once Phase 2 is complete, the platform on the north side of the train tracks will be open for commuters. As part of the Phase 3 construction work, the western portion of the south platform will be closed to commuters and pedestrians to allow for the demolition and reconstruction of the westernmost platform on the south side of the train tracks, including the platform portion of the railroad bridge over Washington Street.

In association with Phase 3 of the project, nightly lane closures are tentatively slated to begin on Aug. 28 and are expected to run through Sept. 2. The lane closures will be in effect from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. on Washington Street from Fifth Avenue to North Avenue.

According to city officials, at least one travel lane will remain open at all times during the work. Flagging operations will be in effect to guide traffic and ensure passage of emergency vehicles. Northbound and southbound motorists on Washington Street can expect to experience delays during this time, and motorists should allow additional time for their trip or seek an alternate route to avoid these delays, city officials said.

The work is weather dependent. Notice of schedule changes will be posted to the city's website at [www.naperville.il.us/metraplatform.aspx](http://www.naperville.il.us/metraplatform.aspx).

The Naperville Metra Station Platform Improvement Project involves removal and reconstruction of the north and south platforms of the Naperville Metra Station. Construction is slated for completion in 2012.

Naperville Sun

## **Metra eyes lesser cuts, but fare hikes loom larger**



## Up to 20 percent possible in 2012, CEO says

August 13, 2011|By Richard Wronski, Tribune reporter

Metra officials on Friday all but killed a proposal for weekday service reductions to offset a looming deficit in 2012, adding to the inevitability of fare increases — possibly as high as 20 percent next year alone.

The commuter rail agency's directors threw cold water on a plan floated last month to cut 31 weekday trains on 10 of Metra's 11 lines. They seemed more receptive to a less-severe option, introduced Friday, that calls for trimming weekend service on three lines and two little-used daily runs.

"We're not in the business of cutting service," said board member Jim LaBelle of Lake County.

But the new option would only save Metra \$894,000, a tiny fraction of a potential \$100 million budget hole. The proposed weekday service cuts would have saved about \$8.2 million.

That would increase the pressure to raise money via fare hikes, Metra CEO Alex Clifford acknowledged.

"It's just simple math," he said. "If you go from \$8 million in service reductions to less than \$1 million, you're going to have that (need) play out on the fare increase side."

Clifford reiterated that Metra might need to hike fares as high as 20 percent in 2012, with another, lesser increase in 2013 and regular cost-of-living adjustments after that.

"Remember, this (fare hike) can has been kicked down the road a bit too long. We need to catch up. That's why we're having a big bump," Clifford said.

No specific fare proposal is expected until next month, and a decision on fare changes isn't likely until October or November.

The Metra staff has recommended that weekend service be trimmed on the Milwaukee District North, Union Pacific North, and SouthWest Service lines. These runs were added in 2008 and 2009.

In addition, weekday SouthWest Service on two trains between Orland Park's 179th Street station and Manhattan would be eliminated.

After service reductions were proposed in July, Metra posted a survey on its website asking for customers' feedback.

Among other findings, more than 31 percent of respondents said they would prefer to pay up to a 25 percent fare increase rather than have service reductions, according to Metra.

"What we're hearing is that, generally speaking, riders are willing to pay a little more in fares rather than see their service go away," Clifford said.

Mike Crowley, a SouthWest Service commuter from Orland Park, said "it would be tough" if the line stopped Saturday runs.

"We're pretty far away from the city," said Crowley, 26. "If you wanted to go to a festival, you're screwed. You would have to drive in."

While some Metra directors said they could "live with" the new proposed cuts, Brad O'Halloran said they didn't make any sense.

"What they were basically talking about was a savings of less than \$1 million a year, and you're talking about a budget of over half a billion dollars," said the Orland Park village trustee. "I'm one vote, but I will be heard." U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski, a Democrat from Western Springs who was instrumental in expanding SouthWest Service, said that while he recognized Metra's "harsh fiscal realities," he urged the agency to "select options that do the least harm to the public."

A key factor in determining the extent of the price hikes and service cuts will be calculating the rising cost of diesel. Officials are considering whether to "lock in" to a fixed diesel contract or follow the market price. Metra most recently raised fares last year, when weekend fares rose to \$7 from \$5, and the price of one-way tickets went up an average of 6 percent. Metra raised regular weekday fares 10 percent in 2008.

Tribune reporter Jeff Vorva contributed.  
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## Oak Forest Plans for \$3 Million Metra Station

With a recent \$1.3 million grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation, Oak Forest has acquired \$2 million of the \$3.4 million needed to complete the new Metra station at 159th and Cicero.

By Lauren Traut August 18, 2011

With the help of a \$1.3 million grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation, Oak Forest is now \$2 million closer to a new and improved Metra station.

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced last week that it awarded the City of Oak Forest \$1.3 million to build a new Metra train station at 159th Street and Cicero Avenue. The city said it will need \$3.4 million to complete the project. Administrators will apply for additional grants for the remaining funds.

"We are extremely grateful for the widespread support we have received for this project," said Community Development Director Adam Dotson. "Several legislators and regional organizations have been working diligently on our behalf."



As part of its grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the city included letters of support from Illinois State Senator Maggie Crotty, Congressman Bobby Rush, Cook County Commissioner Joan Patricia Murphy, Metra, the Regional Transportation Authority, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, and the Illinois Department of Transportation, according to a press release from the city.

Once the new station is complete, commuters will enjoy a warming shelter, bike parking and lockers, bathrooms, indoor/outdoor seated waiting areas, and a geothermal heating system.

The city's Metra station runs between Joliet and downtown Chicago and serves approximately 1,600 weekday commuters.

## **Sales tax loophole leaves some cities, towns crying foul as firms exploit Illinois law**

**Some government agencies plan to pursue legal action against companies that set up satellite offices in other parts of the state to avoid higher sales-tax rates in Chicago and the surrounding area**

By Kathy Bergen, Ameet Sachdev and Alejandra Cancino,  
Tribune reporters

**August 21, 2011**

Dozens of companies doing business in the Chicago area are routing their sales through small outlying municipalities with low sales tax rates, siphoning tens of millions of dollars from city and suburban taxing districts.

These companies, ranging from catalog houses and appliance retailers to oil companies and computer purveyors, shift the official point of purchase from the Chicago area to such locations as Kankakee and Channahon in order to escape the high sales-tax rates in Cook and some collar counties. One significant advantage for the companies is that they can sell products to customers at a lower tax cost, effectively reducing the purchase price and gaining an advantage over competitors.

It's a tax-reduction strategy that has gained momentum in the past decade, fostered by consultants who help companies set up and operate satellite offices, some of which are not much more than scantily equipped storefronts. To woo and retain the remote offices, towns

often rebate a portion of their sales taxes to the businesses.

Officials of towns such as Channahon say they are adhering to rules set forth in Illinois tax code, and that the remote offices provide a few jobs and extra sales tax revenue to bolster their budgets.

"It built our village hall, which is not the Taj Mahal but is very functional, and we've had some updates to our waste treatment plant and facilities," Channahon Mayor Joe Cook said. "I don't begrudge any community that's going out to grab any dollar they can. When it all comes down to it, local government tends to be very parochial."

The tactics escaped attention until fairly recently, when the economic downturn put intense pressures on Chicago-area government budgets and leaders began to feel they were being aced out of crucial revenue.

Now, several government entities are attempting to grab back the tax dollars.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's office said late Friday that the city plans to file a lawsuit early next week against Kankakee and Channahon. "There is money that should be going to Chicago that is going to other cities," said Chris Mather, a spokeswoman for Emanuel.

The Regional Transportation Authority, which relies on sales tax for half its budget, is working with Illinois House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie, D-Chicago, on legislation aimed at blocking the tax maneuver and is hoping for a resolution during the October veto session.

"This practice has to stop; every month we lose money," said Jordan Matyas, RTA's deputy executive director.

Just how much money is at stake is hard to track. Kankakee, which observers think has the largest program, reported paying companies about \$125 million in sales-tax rebates between 2002 and 2010, but if those sales had taken place in higher tax venues, they easily could have generated double or triple that amount.

Meanwhile, the state's Department of Revenue is conducting audits in 26 municipalities, most in metro Chicago, that are believed to have lost tax dollars, RTA officials said. The revenue department does not



comment on whether it has audits pending, a spokeswoman said.

Cook County government is researching potential lost income as well, a spokesman said.

Within the next week, as many as eight suburbs that are home to Plass Appliance & Furniture showrooms are expected to jointly send a letter to the Revenue Department, asking for a ruling on the company's routing of sales through Channahon, said Martin Bourke, village administrator for Bloomingdale, a DuPage County suburb.

The retailer stopped paying taxes to Bloomingdale in January 2008, and the village estimates it has lost nearly \$100,000 in that time. Plass executives did not respond to requests for comment.

"Plass is considered a minor player in our sales tax portfolio," Bourke said, "but the problem we have is we don't know if this is happening with other vendors."

Municipal administrators such as Bourke have been frustrated in their attempts to size up losses to their towns because they have been unable to obtain full lists of involved companies from the cities that offer the sales-tax incentive deals, despite requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

"You can't pierce the veil to see what's going on behind the curtain," said Brad Bettenhausen, treasurer for Tinley Park, which never received sales tax from the Plass outlet that opened there in 2007.

The Tinley Park tax rate in the Cook County portion of town, where Plass is located, is 8.5 percent, compared with 7.25 in the Grundy County portion of Channahon used by many remote offices.

Often, cities strike sales-tax incentive deals with consultants who act as middlemen, and those contracts generally have been made available. But those consultants in turn strike confidential deals with individual companies seeking lower taxes. Municipalities seeking the identity of those firms through FOIA requests have been thwarted so far.

"I'm under a confidentiality agreement that says I can't give up the information," said Cook, Channahon's mayor. Kankakee Mayor Nina Epstein did not respond to requests for an interview on Friday.

The RTA found 33 companies that had contracts with Kankakee and eight that had contracts with Channahon. The actual total is likely higher because some contracts are with consultants who bring in multiple companies. The rosters include some big corporate names, among them Target Corp., Forsythe Technology Inc. and SPS Inc., a procurement subsidiary of Sears Holdings Corp. Target and Forsythe, an information technology company based in Skokie, exited the arrangements last year.

"Like all responsible corporate citizens, we operate fully under the law and make business decisions to meet our customers' best interests and ensure our viability as a company," said Kyra Auslander, a spokeswoman for Forsythe. Sears Holdings said the company pays all required taxes on all transactions in Illinois.

Those companies did not discuss exactly how they put the agreements to use, but experts say companies often use these arrangements to reduce costs in their own purchasing programs. The arrangements also are popular with companies that buy and sell high volumes of commodities because it represents a significant price reduction for customers.

The state's sales tax rate is 6.25 percent, and 1 percent of that is shared with municipalities. To encourage businesses to open sales offices, municipalities such as Kankakee and Channahon frequently pledge 70 to 85 percent of their local share to the firms for a period of years.

In Kankakee, for instance, there is no additional sales tax above the 6.25 percent, so companies, even after sharing the rebate with a consultant, can pay a rate under 6 percent, compared with rates as high as 9.75 percent in Chicago.

Illinois is among a handful of states where sales tax is applied where an offer is accepted, rather than where a product is delivered to the customer.

For most cash-and-carry retailers, like a supermarket or big-box electronics store, the acceptance would occur at purchase. But for products that are ordered and delivered later, the sale can be accepted elsewhere, and that's where the remote offices come in.

The key legal question is whether the remote offices are true sales processing operations or token setups for tax



purposes. In 2008, for instance, the Illinois Department of Revenue challenged a claim by Hartney Fuel Oil Co., a major petroleum marketer that its sales office was in tiny Mark, Ill., with a population of 500. The Revenue Department lost a two-year court fight but is appealing.

A case involving another oil company is pending as well.

A visit to some remote offices in Kankakee and Channahon demonstrate the difficulty in making such assessments.

Late Friday morning, there was no answer at the locked door of MTS Consulting LLC, which has a sales-tax incentive agreement with Kankakee. A peek inside the mail slot revealed a single desk and two chairs, a fax/copy machine and a bathroom. A large pile of unopened mail was inside the door.

Scott Browdy, an attorney representing MTS, declined to comment. He also represents Inspired Development LLC and Minority Development LLC, two companies that have sales-tax rebate agreements with Kankakee and recruit companies to locate offices there.

Several other offices in Channahon and Kankakee, including one above a hair-braiding salon, appeared to be staffed by just one person. In one case, the office had no sign.

Channahon's Cook says all the offices in his town are legitimate sales operations.

But the RTA is skeptical, Matyas said.

"With all due respect to Kankakee and Channahon, just as no one would mistake them for offshore tax havens, no one should believe that their misinterpretation of Illinois tax law is correct or that their schemes to siphon sales-tax money to their cities is in the best interests of our state," he said.

Still, a coalition of Illinois businesses and tax consultants likes the status quo and earlier this year supported legislation sponsored by Sen. Toi Hutchinson, D-Olympia Fields, that would have spelled out that sales taxes should be attributed to the unit of local government where the purchase orders are accepted, solidifying current practice.

But the Department of Revenue, some local governments and the Regional Transportation Authority opposed the bill because it would have given businesses

too much leeway to set up remote sales offices in lower-tax jurisdictions.

The Revenue Department proposed a multifactor test to determine the proper place for tax collection when the point of sale isn't as clear-cut as a cash-and-carry transaction. The criteria would have included the location of the product inventory and the location of sales negotiations. The proposal was part of an amendment offered by Currie.

Both proposals stalled in the legislature. Currie's proposal was rejected by business groups, such as the Illinois Retail Merchants Association and the Taxpayers' Federation of Illinois, which said the multifactor test would have caused more confusion because it involved subjective criteria.

"Some of the language we've seen is pretty murky," said Tom Johnson, president of the Taxpayers' Federation. "It would have been difficult for retailers to determine their tax rate."

Currie said she is working with all parties to come up with legislation that would provide clarity for the Revenue Department and taxpayers, and eliminate abuses.

*Tribune reporters Dawn Rhodes and Melissa Harris contributed.*

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## **Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department adds three new MCI® ISTV inmate transportation vehicles to support prisoner transport system**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — August 5, 2011** — When municipalities large and small transport prisoners to court dates, local jails and area prison facilities, chances are they're going in Motor Coach Industries' purpose-built Inmate Security Transportation Vehicle (ISTV).

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) added three new 2011 ISTVs to its 82-coach fleet, replacing three older coaches in its system, which carries between 5,000-6,000 inmates a day between early morning and midnight.

"We're running inmates to court dates and state prisons throughout the day — we transport both men and women on these routes, and we handle juvenile transport as well," explains Rick Lantz, automotive coordinator for the LASD. "We also handle runs for patients who need dialysis and other services."



Lantz explains that roughly half of the Sheriff's Department's coach fleet "dates back to 1987," so the department has been trying to replace as many as it can each year based on its share of funding from the Los Angeles County court system.



For the past two decades, MCI has been the only North American coach manufacturer producing turnkey, fully secured heavy-duty inmate transport coaches. The LASD's newest models feature environmentally friendly Detroit Series 60 engine and Allison transmission and seat up to 50 inmates. Shatter-resistant acrylic windows are standard features on ISTVs, along with other special custom-features designed to protect and secure inmates.

Lantz pointed out that the LASD has been buying MCI ISTVs for years — "They're a reliable vehicle for what they do." He also explains the department is "looking at every source of grant funding available" to improve the emissions standards on all of their old vehicles that will eventually be replaced.

Lantz pointed out that the LASD, founded in 1850, has used buses for prisoner transport since the dawn of the automotive age.

## Orléans Express adds 11 MCI® J4500 coaches

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — August 4, 2011** — Groupe Orléans Express, Eastern Canada's largest coach transportation company, has added 11 MCI J4500s to its fleet serving the Greater Montréal community.



The 21-year-old company serves the Québec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island provinces notably the Montréal-Québec City corridor, with departures nearly every hour each day. The intercity services are operated under the *Orléans Express* (Québec) and *Acadian* (Maritime provinces) brand names while the urban transportation services operated for municipalities around Montréal are under Orléans Urbain - Lanau Bus based in Repentigny and Terrebonne.

Groupe Orléans Express took five new and six pre-owned J4500 coaches, and equipped them with bike racks. Eight of the coaches also feature wheelchair lifts. The coaches will be used by Lanau Bus which operates city transit services in Les Moulins, L'Assomption and the City of Joliette.

Groupe Orléans Express is also active in the charter bus services, school bus transportation, parcel transportation and maintenance services. The company is 75 percent owned by Keolis S.A, a French transportation company present in 12 countries, and 25 percent by Sylvain Langis its President and CEO. The company transports annually more than 1.7 million passengers and almost a million parcels with a total staff of 900, and operates a fleet of 400 buses including 130 coaches.

## Gaylord Opryland adds eight J4500s to shuttle fleet

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — July 01, 2011** — Nashville country-music fans will ride in style to the airport and beyond, thanks to the Gaylord Opryland's recent purchase of eight 2011 MCI® J4500s. The coaches, which have been delivered and added to the company's shuttle fleet, are being used for airport service and large group moves, according to Tracey Belcher, Gaylord Opryland director of transportation.



The new coaches have Detroit Series 60 engines and Allison B500 transmissions; seating with three-point safety belts; Braun wheelchair lifts; and an ASA color back-up camera. The Blaupunkt Enhanced Audio System and six 15.4-inch LCD widescreen monitors allow the company to show promotional and



informational videos to its guests. Ten 110-volt outlets allow passengers to charge their electronic devices. Gaylord Opryland also opted for extra warranty coverage.

"We've had a good track record with MCI," said Belcher. "These are some pretty high-end buses for what we use them for, but we have such a high volume that they're the only things that make sense. We get to impress the guests who come here—we want them to feel like we're taking care of them in a proper manner. The J4500s offer a 'wow' factor."

Belcher said he's also pleased with the coaches' latest generation of clean-diesel power. "The fuel mileage is better than we were expecting," said Belcher. "Also, we promote the green factor to our customers. It's in our fliers, and we inform them of the cleaner emissions and fuel savings."

Newly restored, Gaylord Opryland is one of Nashville's premier resorts as well as the flagship property of the Gaylord hotel line. It has won many awards and honors, including "Best Hotel" and five other "Best" categories in the Tennessean's Toast of Music City edition; Southern Living Magazine's Reader's Choice Award in 2009 and eight other years since 1999; and the 2010 Professional Convention Management Association Chairman's Award for leadership in overcoming the city's historic flood.

The hotel's transportation division currently maintains about 10 coaches as well as other vehicles. In addition to providing airport shuttle service, it offers service to the Gaylord Springs golf course, downtown Nashville, the Grand Ole Opry and other attractions; it also offers sightseeing tours around the Nashville area.

## **Premier Alaska Tours adds two new MCI® J4500 coaches Passengers get cozy comfort for wilderness land tours, workday commutes**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — June 17, 2011** — Premier Alaska Tours, Anchorage, finds the MCI J4500 coach ideal for its high-end tour clients, rugged roads and extreme winter weather. The charter company has added two new 2011 MCI J4500 coaches. The model now accounts for 75 percent of Premier Alaska's fleet of 32 MCI coaches.

Premier Alaska's newest J4500 coaches are equipped with three-point passenger seatbelts, pillow-top plush seating by Amaya, a state-of-the-art Blaupunkt entertainment system with six flat-screen monitors and 110-volt power ports at every seat. The company, renowned for creating customized land-tour packages for international cruise ship operators during the spring and summer months, also keeps its fleet busy by providing commuter services to oil and forestry company

executives and charter services to school districts in the winter months.



Due to the extreme winter weather conditions in Alaska, the company takes its models with specifications that include a larger auxiliary heater, extra insulation, and a heated entryway and driver area. "The J4500 is a good coach for us," said Josh Howes, president of Premier Alaska. "The model has great curb appeal and fewer components for us to worry about. MCI has always been able to do the conversions that we request, such as the heated stairwell and bigger heaters; these make a big difference when it's 40 degrees below zero."

Premier Alaska Tours started in 1995 as a local travel agency. It began to offer charters in 2000, when it purchased a pre-owned coach. The company took delivery of its first new MCI coach in 2001. Today, the company has a complete fleet of 50 vehicles. It operates its own service centers in Anchorage and Fairbanks, which are recommended by MCI's roadside assistance network for maintenance and repair.

The company is owned and operated by Alaskans. Premier Alaska additionally hires about 125 local summer staff and drivers, chosen for their ability to enhance guests' experience of the state. For more information, visit: [www.premieralaskatours.com](http://www.premieralaskatours.com).

## **Krapf's Coaches puts two MCI® J4500s into top-tier charter service**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — July 14, 2011** — Krapf Bus Companies, West Chester, Pennsylvania, has put two new MCI J4500s into its 20-coach mostly-MCI Krapf's Coaches fleet. The new J4500s, delivered in spring, are the first Krapf coaches to feature three-point seatbelts and 110-volt outlets for passengers wishing to power personal electronic devices.

The new coaches also feature clean-diesel Detroit Diesel engines and Allison transmissions, along with standard MCI safety features such as electronic steering control and wide-ride suspension. Krapf additionally offers Wi-Fi service to its onboard customers.



Gary Krapf, president and third-generation leader of the family-run company, which will celebrate its 70th year next fall, says the coaches are going over well with customers. "They've been wonderful," said Krapf. "We've had tremendous customer response. The coaches look great, and we can really promote the extras."



Krapf also points to his longtime association with MCI as a selling point. "We have a long history with MCI, and it's always been our primary vehicle. We alternate between a lot of D-coaches and J4500s. In this case, we wanted the J4500 for our lead charter work. These coaches are going to our top customers and our top drivers."

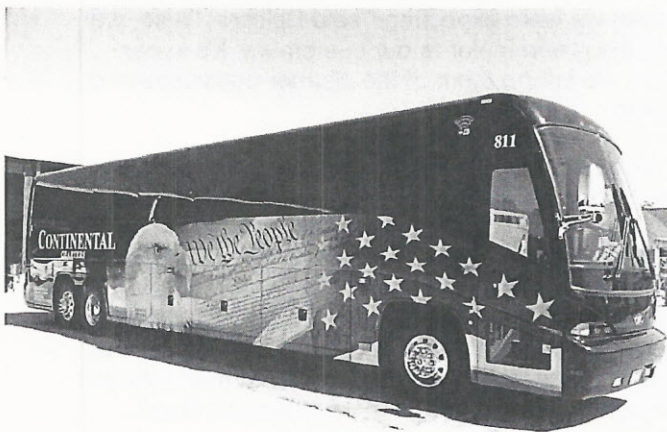
One of the most successful, diversified coach operators in the eastern United States, Krapf Bus got its start in 1942 with a single school bus. Today, the company has an extensive school-bus business; offers fixed-route, contract shuttle and transit service; and serves the paratransit market under the Rover Community Transportation name. Its charter business takes in sights around the New York, Atlantic City and Washington, D.C., areas as well as longer over-the-road trips across the U.S. and Canada.

Krapf runs charter coaches both out of its West Chester offices and another location in Delaware; the Delaware coaches operate under the acquired Gregg Bus Service name. Krapf was named 2009 Operator of the Year by METRO Magazine. The company is also a member of International Motor Coach Group as well as the American Bus Association, United Motorcoach Association, Pennsylvania Bus Association and Global Passenger Network. It is also a Motorcoach Council Founding Partner.

The company has made a significant commitment to green operations, using recycled water in its bus wash; making use of biofuels and waste-oil heating; and making a significant commitment early on to diesel particulate filter technology.

## Continental Bus Lines goes on patriotic drive with newest MCI® J4500 coach

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — June 17, 2011** — Crediting its newer fleet with its ongoing growth, Houston-based Continental Bus Lines has put another new MCI J4500 coach into service, this time with American-themed graphics. The company purchased its first new coach, also a J4500, last year. Owner Jose Morales founded Continental in 2001 with a pre-owned MCI. In ten years' time, Morales has built his business to a fleet of eight motor coaches, mostly later models.



Continental's newest MCI J4500 comes equipped with a Cummins engine and MCI's latest upgrades and options including plush leather seating, three-point passenger seatbelts, Wi-Fi connectivity, in-motion Satellite TV and 110-volt outlets that let passengers plug in their electronic devices.

The coach's eye-catching patriot graphics, designed by Turbo Images, pay tribute to Morales' appreciation of the U.S. "We love our country and are happy to display our patriotism on our newest motor coach," said Morales. "We hope the coach's graphic, which displays the American flag, the Declaration of Independence and the American eagle, instills in others the sense of pride we feel to live in this great country."

Continental runs charters and tours throughout the continental U.S. and Canada. It has 15 employees, operates its own five-bay maintenance shop and can help fellow operators with repairs should they be traveling in the area. Morales said that since he began purchasing newer coaches, his business has been growing.

He anticipates keeping Continental family owned and operated, and he hopes his son, now a teenager, will eventually earn a business degree and take over.



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line of descent from the ancestral  
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## **Megabus.com expands service to Omaha**

CHICAGO (August 4, 2011) – Omaha residents can now travel to Chicago, Des Moines, Iowa; and Iowa City, Iowa, for as low as \$1. Megabus.com, a city-to-city, express bus company, today announced its expansion to Omaha and will begin daily service to and from the city on August 17. Customers can begin booking their tickets starting today.

Megabus.com will offer two daily departures from its arrival and departure location at Crossroads Mall on North 72<sup>nd</sup> Street between Dodge and Cass Streets, adjacent to the parking garage.

Customers are encouraged to book early to secure \$1 fares. Fares always start as low as \$1 and get higher as the traveling date gets closer.

"The overwhelming popularity of megabus.com inspired us to expand our service reach again and we are pleased to grow farther west to Omaha," said Dale Moser, president and COO of megabus.com. "As the public continues to search for ways to stretch their dollar, megabus.com will now be able to deliver safe,

convenient and affordable travel to Omaha-area residents."

To celebrate this service expansion, megabus.com is offering 1,000 free seats on the Chicago-Omaha route for travel Aug. 17 through Sept. 17. The free seats will be available on megabus.com to and from Omaha. Customers will need to use the promo code OMA1K when booking their tickets via [www.megabus.com](http://www.megabus.com) (subject to availability on select dates, routes).

Megabus.com, a subsidiary of Coach USA, launched in April 2006 and has served more than 10 million travelers. In addition to low fares, megabus.com offers customers environmentally-friendly buses, free Wi-Fi, power outlets and restrooms.

Visit [www.megabus.com](http://www.megabus.com) for additional information about the service, schedules, arrival and departure times and fares.



Omnibus Society of America

## Visit to CTA Maintenance Training Center

1120 East 89th

3 pm, Friday, October 7, 2011

OSA has arranged a site visit to CTA's Maintenance Training Center. We'll have a fascinating look at buses in exploded views of transmission, electrical, and other systems used to train bus mechanics. Some CTA buses have hybrid transmission and drive systems, so it's a good opportunity to get close up views and detailed explanations of the new electronic systems.

Instructors will be on hand to answer questions.

All are welcome. Please let Adam know that you are taking the tour so we have a proper head count. Email [trans@chinet.com](mailto:trans@chinet.com) or cell phone 847-215-0180

If anyone wants to travel together by convenient public transportation, we could meet in the Loop at Harold Washington Library at 1:45 pm. Let Adam know if you want to do that.

