



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

**NOV-DEC 2011**

**RUN 06-2011**

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.

### • NOV-DEC MEETINGS

**The November meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on November 4, 2011, at the Beef & Brandy located at 127 S. State Street in downtown Chicago. This will be the OSA's 50th Anniversary dinner/meeting. Dinner will begin at 7:00pm (general menu, individual settlement) with a one hour digital presentation of past OSA trips being presented by David Wilson.

**The December meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on December 2, 2011. The program for the evening will be a slide presentation by Mr. Milwaukee, Ed Montejano.

## **Mayor Emanuel Joins Chicago Transit Authority President Forrest Claypool to Unveil New LED Bus Tracker Displays For Bus Shelters**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) President Forrest Claypool today to unveil the first of 400 Light Emitting Diode (LED) Bus Tracker displays that will be installed at select JC Decaux bus shelters throughout all 50 Aldermanic Wards.

"As Mayor, my goal is to make Chicago the best city in the nation to live, work and raise a family with a high quality of life," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel at the site of the first LED installation at Lake Park Avenue and east Hyde Park Boulevard. "Every day, approximately 1.6 million riders take CTA to and from work, school or for recreation, and providing those riders with clean, reliable, safe and modern transportation, maintains a high quality of life for

our residents."

The displays will provide four lines of text via CTA Bus Tracker with bus arrival information, and eventually important customer alerts affecting the respective route and surrounding transfer points. The LED signs will be installed on the sides of bus shelters and face outward to serve as many riders as possible – both those at the stop and within the vicinity of the shelter.

"The installation of these signs will help simplify commuting by providing highly visible information on bus arrivals at that stop, including places where there are transfers to bus or rail service," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "The availability of these signs also will extend the benefits of CTA Bus Tracker to those who may not be familiar with the service or may not have the tools to access it while on the go."

Installation of the first 150 signs begins today, and will be completed by March 2012.

The full list of locations for the first 150 signs will be posted of the CTA's web site.

The locations were selected based on ridership, stops serving multiple bus routes, bus-to-bus transfers, and locations providing transfers to Metra and Pace.

After testing, the remaining 250 signs will be installed by September 2012.

Funds for the purchase and maintenance of the signs are made available through \$1.4 million of CTA funds, a \$1.8 million Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) grant and a \$640,000 Federal Transit Administration, Congestion Mitigation and Quality (CMAQ) grant.

The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), which oversees the JC Decaux contract and maintains the public right of ways, will be the CTA's partner in the operations and maintenance of the LED screens.

"These investments in mass transit, bike lanes and our neighborhoods all attracts new residents to Chicago, which helps us continue moving forward as a world-class city," added Emanuel.



Earlier this month, the Mayor joined Claypool to announce a new station renewal initiative, designed to provide a facelift to 100 CTA rail stations over the next 12 months.

In July, the Mayor also joined CTA to announce it would invest \$10 million to hire 50 full-time police officers to patrol rail and bus stations across the city. The police officers are scheduled to begin the Police Academy in the fall, and are expected to be detailed to the Public Transportation Section by spring 2012.

## **CTA Faces \$277 Million Deficit in 2012**

10/4/2011

### ***Union work rules, escalating pension and health care costs and highest salaries in nation fuel deficit***

The CTA faces a \$277 million budget deficit for 2012, the result of skyrocketing labor costs and an end to years of borrowing, CTA President Forrest Claypool announced today.

The CTA's current operating budget is \$1.35 billion. Citing archaic and expensive work rules, dramatically escalating pension and health care mandates, and the highest cost-adjusted rail and bus operator salaries in the nation, Claypool said current CTA labor costs are unsustainable.

Noting that the CTA has borrowed \$554 million in the past four years to cover operating deficits, despite a 2009 fare hike and 2010 service cuts, Claypool said it was time to deal with these challenges and make decisions that will fix the CTA's broken fiscal system. "We can't defer the hard decisions any longer. The CTA's cost structure is too high given the revenues and tax receipts we have to operate it," Claypool said. "Changes are needed now to shore up the CTA's fiscal situation. A robust, modern transit system is not just important to transit riders. It is important to the livability of the region and its ability to attract jobs and businesses. An investment in transit is an investment in the future of this region."

The financial crisis affecting the CTA has taken years to develop, Claypool said, and has its roots in funding formulas that shortchange the agency, a neglected infrastructure, and a growing list of expensive state and federal mandates.

But the biggest contributing factor has been unrestrained wage and benefit growth in labor agreements, even during the Great Recession, and a plethora of arcane work rules that cost the agency tens of millions annually, Claypool said.

Despite the shortfalls and in the absence of funding that would allow it to implement more sweeping changes,

CTA is making improvements to its infrastructure and safety to ensure that the customer experience remains a good one.

Two weeks ago, CTA announced a program called "Station Renewal" that involves the cleaning and repair of 100 rail stations over the next 12 months and last week, the agency unveiled the new LED signs that will bring Bus Tracker to 400 bus shelters across the city. Claypool also announced in July that 50 new, full-time police officers will be patrolling the CTA in 2012 and that CTA is doubling the number of security cameras along the system from 1,500 to 3,000 by year's end.

"As we work through the many challenges that exist today and that lay ahead, we know that mass transit can help create more jobs, stronger neighborhoods, improve property values and provide a better quality of life. It is imperative that we address the challenges before us so that the CTA remains a strong and vital part of our city and region," Claypool said.

## **CTA Eliminates 200 Positions as it**

### **Prepares for 2012 Budget**

10/10/2011

### ***Agency Also Revises Sick, Vacation Policies; Creates First-Ever Paid Parental Leave Policy***

The Chicago Transit Authority today announced the elimination of over 200 positions, part of its continuing efforts to drive efficiencies as it prepares to release its 2012 budget. The agency also revised its sick and vacation policies, moves that will save the financially troubled agency tens of millions of dollars.

The personnel cuts will save the CTA approximately \$22 million annually at a time when the agency is facing a \$277 million deficit, while the sick and vacation leave policy changes will save the agency an estimated \$15 million over the next six years.

"Following Mayor Emanuel's leadership, we have continued to make the CTA more efficient by eliminating unnecessary and duplicative positions, while creating sound and reasonable sick and vacation leave policies," CTA President Forrest Claypool said. "As the CTA prepares to close one of its worst budget deficits in recent memory, it is incumbent upon us to find ways to do more with less."

The 200 positions include the positions that were eliminated in July 2011, and include a mix of layoffs and vacancy eliminations. About two-thirds of the new cuts will come from filled positions. As part of these cuts, a number of senior-level positions have been eliminated, including vice-presidents, general managers and directors.



The CTA now has a lean management structure, with an average of 21 front-line staffers for every manager. In addition, the CTA now has the smallest number of employees in its history, with 25 percent fewer employees than a decade ago.

About 70 percent of the CTA's budget goes to labor costs, and 91 percent of the labor force is unionized. The CTA's union contracts expire at the end of the year and are up for renegotiation.

Among the changes to the sick and holiday leave policies are:

- Elimination for non-bargained employees of the floating holiday policy and birthday and anniversary days off. This will end the decades-old practice of granting employees days off on their birthday and employment date anniversary. Instead, employees will be allowed four paid personal days each year compared to the current six floating holidays allowed.
- Non-bargained employees will accrue sick time at a rate of one half (1/2) a day a pay period and will be able to earn up to 13 sick days per year with a maximum accrual of sick time of twenty-six (26) days. This replaces a policy of six-months of sick leave for all non-bargained employees.
- Female employees will be eligible to receive four (4) weeks of fully paid leave after giving birth, while domestic/civil union partners and spouses will be eligible to receive two (2) weeks of fully paid leave after the birth of a child. Adoptive parents will be eligible to receive two (2) weeks of fully paid leave after the birth and/or placement of an adopted child.
- Non-bargained employees will accrue vacation leave on an on-going basis at a rate based on years of service. Non-bargained employees' vacation allowance will be capped at twenty-five (25) days of vacation compared to the current maximum of 35 days.
- Pay for unused vacation days following separation from the agency will be capped at 25 days after December 31, 2012. Previously, non-bargained employees could be paid for up to 88 days.
- Employees will no longer be able to buy back unused vacation days.

"Amid a deep and continuing recession, these changes will make the CTA more efficient and still provide fair and reasonable policies for our employees," Claypool said. "I also look forward to working with our labor leaders to find common sense, rational and fair solutions that reduce our labor costs while providing stable

employment for their members. It is time for everyone to step up so we can put CTA on solid financial ground."

## **CTA to Install Express Vending Machine at Metra Electric Station**

10/13/2011

CTA and Metra are joining together to install a CTA Express Vending Machine (EVM) at the Electric District's 55<sup>th</sup> 56<sup>th</sup> 57<sup>th</sup> Street station (1500 East 57<sup>th</sup> Street) to improve convenience for customers who transfer between the two transit agencies as their mode of travel.

"We continue our efforts to make using the CTA system as convenient for customers as possible," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "Approximately 20,000 CTA customers also use Metra and the ability to purchase a farecard or add value at a Metra station makes using both systems easier. The ability to use a credit card or appropriate debit card also means customers don't have to have the exact amount of cash in order to make their transaction."

The express vending machine at the 55<sup>th</sup> 56<sup>th</sup> 57<sup>th</sup> Street station will allow customers to use credit cards to purchase magnetic strip transit cards and add value to either magnetic strip transit cards or Chicago Cards using Visa, MasterCard, Discover Card and American Express credit cards, as well as debit cards that have an accompanying credit card logo.

When paying with a credit card or an applicable debit card, the minimum value that can be added to a magnetic strip transit card or Chicago Card is \$5. As a security measure, the maximum value that can be charged to a credit card is \$25 each calendar day.

As part of the agreement with Metra, CTA will install and maintain the Express Vending Machine and Metra will provide the electricity need to operate the machine.

Currently there are 61 EVMs at CTA rail stations including at O'Hare station (Blue Line), Merchandise Mart (Brown and Purple Express Lines), Clark/Lake (Loop), Adams/Jackson (Blue Line), Midway (Orange Line) and 95<sup>th</sup> Street (Red Line).

## **PACE RELEASES PROPOSED 2012 BUDGET**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 12, 2011 4:00:00 PM  
Media Release Office: (847) 228-4295  
Contact: Patrick Willmot (847) 228-4295

No fare increases or service cuts included in budget as public hearings begin October 17

The Pace Board of Directors officially released the agency's 2012 budget for public review and comment, with the first of 13 public hearings beginning next week.



Despite the struggling economy, the agency plans no fare increases or service reductions in its balanced budget for the second straight year.

"We've been aggressively containing our costs and restructuring service to maximize efficiency," said Pace Chairman of the Board Richard Kwasneski. "The actions we've taken in recent years have put us in good position to release a positive budget message- one that not only calls for no negative impacts on riders, but increases service in some areas."

The Suburban Services operating budget, which includes fixed route bus service, vanpool and Dial-a-Ride service, totals \$195 million and includes some new service to be implemented in late 2011 and early 2012. These include two new Call-n-Ride routes in the Wheaton/Winfield and St. Charles/Geneva areas, additional trips on I-55 express service, and a federally-funded route connecting the southwest suburbs with employment centers near O'Hare Airport and in the northwest suburbs.

The Regional ADA Paratransit budget is set at \$126.6 million to provide complementary transportation to people with disabilities in Chicago and the suburbs. The RTA has set contingencies on funding requiring Pace to implement certain efforts to increase efficiency on the service in Chicago. These include setting trip reservation hours to regular business hours and continuing progress toward implementation of a centralized dispatch system.

Thirteen public hearings have been scheduled regionally throughout the city and suburbs, and take place October 17-27. For the first time, Pace will host an online webinar to provide access to those unable to attend a hearing. Details and registration are available at [www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com). "Our budget message is very positive this year, but we still encourage people to participate in the public hearing process," said Kwasneski. "We're always interested in hearing ideas on how we can improve." The budget document is available at public hearings and has been distributed to municipalities and libraries to be made available to the public. It can also be downloaded from Pace's website. Those unable to attend the hearings can submit written comments to Pace Government Affairs, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, IL 60005 or through the Public Hearings section of [www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com).

## **CHANGES COMING TO HIGHLAND PARK BUS ROUTES**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 6, 2011 10:30:00 AM  
Media Release Office: (847) 228-4295  
Contact: Patrick Wilmot (847) 228-4295

Restructuring plan combines three existing routes into two to improve efficiency

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL After more than 35 years of operating essentially unchanged, Highland Park and Pace have partnered on a project to realign the City's bus service. The changes are effective Monday, October 31.

Although the plan calls for the elimination of Route 473, routes 471 and 472 will be extended to serve the portions of route 473 that were most popular with riders, including Target, Highland Park Hospital, Northbrook Court and Crossroads Shopping Center. Other changes are also included in the plan; Route 471 will no longer serve the Parkside subdivision, and the 472 will no longer make the loop on Berkeley, Ridge and Richfield as a result of low ridership in these areas. The 472 has been re-routed, however, to improve access to the nearby shopping center on Deerfield Road with Jewel, Toys R Us and Petco. Route 213, which travels between Highland Park and Evanston via Green Bay Road, will remain unchanged. Fares will remain unchanged at \$1.75.

Through a unique partnership, the City operates Pace routes 471, 472 and 473, which circulate within Highland Park and to key destinations in neighboring towns. Pace has successfully restructured its bus routes in other parts of its service area to respond to changes in demand to improve efficiency and increase convenience for riders. Pace and City staff collaborated on a series of proposed service changes, which were discussed at a public hearing last fall, updated at a public meeting in February, and presented to the City Transportation Committee in April. Based on feedback received at those meetings, Pace and City staff modified the service changes to the plan that will be implemented at the end of this month.

By realigning the bus routes in Highland Park, we were able to make it easier for people to get to the places in town that they want and need to reach, said Pace Chairman of the Board Richard Kwasneski. The existing routings worked well for many years when they were designed in 1976, but Highland Park has changed quite a bit over the years and it's time to respond to those changes while improving service efficiency.

For more information, please see notices posted on buses or visit the route pages for routes 471, 472 and 473 at [www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com). New schedules will soon be posted to Paces website and available on buses, at City Hall, and select other locations.

## **METRA PROPOSED 2012 BUDGET**

The Metra Board of Directors today approved the release of a preliminary 2012 budget that calls for a fare increase that averages about 25 percent across all fare types. The budget plan now will be the subject of a series of public hearings before the board votes on a final budget on Nov. 11.



Metra's proposed 2012 budget includes \$686.8 million for operations and a \$244.1 million capital program.

Metra has been warning for months that it faces a budget deficit next year due to a spike in diesel fuel prices, the demands of meeting new federal regulations, higher insurance premiums and a variety of other rising costs. Meanwhile, proceeds from the regional transportation sales tax have fallen short of expectations due to the faltering economy. And Metra has decided to stop diverting funds from its capital budget, meant for infrastructure improvements, to plug holes in its operating budget. That practice helped Metra get through tough times until now, but simply is not sustainable given our critical capital needs.

Metra was able to reduce the deficit by \$17.5 million through a variety of steps, including locking in the price of 75 percent of its fuel needs, making administrative cuts and finding other operational efficiencies. Those actions reduced the size of the needed fare increase by 7 percentage points. However, there still is a projected budget gap of \$53.6 million that will need to be covered by a fare increase.

Under the fare increase proposal, one-way tickets would increase an average of 15.7 percent across all fare zones. Ten-ride tickets would go up an average of 30 percent, and monthly passes would increase an average of 29.4 percent. Reduced fare one-way tickets would increase an average of 10.3 percent, reduced fare ten-ride tickets would increase an average of 18.9 percent and reduced fare monthly passes would go up an average of 10.8 percent. Taken together, the overall average increase is 25.1 percent.

In addition to the fare increases, several fare policies would change. One-way tickets would only be valid for 14 days, instead of a year, and they would no longer be refundable. The ten-ride ticket discount would be reduced so that riders would get 10 rides for the price of nine, rather than 10 for the price of eight. Ten-ride tickets would remain valid for a year, but would only be refundable within three months of the date of purchase. The 10-ride tickets could be refunded on a pro-rated basis, but there would be a \$5 handling fee. Monthly passes would be valid through the end of the month (instead of noon on the first weekday of the following month) and refunds would be subject to a \$10 fee.

Also, the Metra subsidy for the Link-Up and PlusBus tickets would be eliminated and riders would have to pay the full costs of those passes. Young adult fares on weekends and holidays also would be eliminated.

The fare increase and other changes would begin on Feb. 1, 2012.

Public hearings on Metra's 2012 budget will be held on Nov. 2 and Nov. 3 at locations throughout the six-county region. A list of the dates, times and locations of these hearings accompanies this news release. Copies of the

budget will be available for review online at [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com) and will be distributed to municipalities and libraries across the region.

Following the public comment period, the Metra Board will vote on a final budget at its Nov. 11 meeting. The budget will then be forwarded to the Regional Transportation Authority, which will vote on the region's transportation budget in December.

## **Express bus service OK'd on I-90**

After wishing upon the expensive STAR line in vain, suburban and transit officials will get a less pricey alternative — bus rapid transit along the Jane Addams Tollway (I-90).

Pace will receive about \$38 million in federal air-quality grants to pay for a system of express buses along I-90, following a vote Wednesday by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning board.

Pace will use the funds to buy buses and land for park-and-ride facilities, plus engineering and construction. Early plans call for park-and-ride stops along I-90 at Barrington Road, Route 59, Route 25 and Randall Road.

For years, Northwest suburban leaders had hoped to create a suburb-to-suburb commuter rail service, the STAR line, operated by Metra along the I-90 corridor and on the former EJ&E Railway tracks. But the costs for such a system are prohibitive.

New proposed express bus routes include: Palatine to Schaumburg, Elgin to the Rosemont River Road CTA stop, Elgin to Schaumburg, Addison to Schaumburg, and the Rosemont River Road CTA stop to Prairie Stone in Hoffman Estates. CMAP officials Wednesday approved \$411 million grants for 115 projects, all aimed at reducing congestion and air pollution. Other projects include:

- More than \$5 million for Metra to retrofit train engines to emit less soot;
- About \$17 million to improve the bottleneck at Washington Street and the Metra tracks in Grayslake by creating a grade separation;
- More than \$12 million for intersection improvements along Lake Cook Road at Route 83, Weiland Road and Buffalo Grove Road in northern Cook County;
- About \$6.3 million for intersection improvements at Fabyan Parkway/Washington Street and Roosevelt Road in West Chicago;



- More than \$3 million for a pedestrian crossing on Randall Road from Golden Eagle Drive to Stonegate Road in Algonquin.

## **DURBIN ANNOUNCES \$51 MILLION DOT INVESTMENT TO IMPROVE TRANSIT IN ILLINOIS**

### **Chicago and Rock Island among recipients of funding**

[WASHINGTON, DC] U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) announced today that several Illinois transit projects have been awarded a total of \$51,657,400 in grants through the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT grants include funding to upgrade transit facilities, study new transit routes and replace aging buses and equipment with new fuel-efficient vehicles and cost-saving materials.

"Bringing new buses with more capacity and cleaner emissions to cities throughout Illinois, improves the quality of life for all residents even those that don't rely on public transportation," Durbin said. "Investing in this infrastructure today will contribute to the long-term economic growth of these areas in the future."

The following investments in Illinois' transit infrastructure were made under this announcement:

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Chicago: \$30,000,000 in funding for the purchase of sixty-foot hybrid diesel-electric public transit buses to replace a like amount of forty-foot conventional diesel powered buses that are beyond their useful lives. Hybrid diesel-electric buses achieve at least 20 percent greater fuel efficiency than standard diesel buses, which save fuel dollars while promoting cleaner air. Each sixty-foot bus replaces an average of 78 passenger cars, helping to ease traffic congestion in neighborhoods served by the CTA. This project was selected on a competitive basis through the 2011 State of Good Repair Program.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Chicago: \$6,000,000 in funding to make accessibility improvements at the Wilson Red Line Station which is served by four bus routes that together they provide direct service to 55,275 people. The project includes a new elevator control room and rail maintenance room, a new elevator inside the main station house at street level, as well as street modifications and exterior rehabilitation. This project was selected on a competitive basis through the 2011 Bus Livability Program.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Chicago: \$2,000,000 in funding to conduct a study along the Chicago Lakefront Corridor to determine the feasibility and appropriate level of investment for high capacity transit connections in the 24-mile corridor from Howard Street to 103rd Street. The route is currently served by 18 CTA bus routes carrying

109,000 weekday passengers on congested roadways. Along with a need to address congestion in the corridor Communities in the study area need rapid and reliable transit service to provide convenient access to Central Business District as well as job centers outside of the central area. This project was selected on a competitive basis through the 2011 Alternatives Analysis Program.

Pace Suburban Bus Division of the RTA, Arlington Heights: \$5,075,000 in funding to replace obsolete emergency generators for its garage facilities. The current generators are between 17 and 26 years old and are obsolete. This project was selected on a competitive basis through the 2011 State of Good Repair Program.

Rock Island County Metropolitan Mass Transit District, Rock Island: \$2,082,400 in funding to build a transportation hub in downtown Rock Island. The proposed 1,600 square-foot building will accommodate 10 buses at any given time and will include a lobby and restrooms. The current transfer hub is much smaller and has no bus berths for transferring passengers outside traffic lanes, greatly impeding traffic flow. This project was selected on a competitive basis through the 2011 Bus Livability Program.

Rock Island County Metropolitan Mass Transit District, Moline: \$3,000,000 in funding to replace buses in the MetroLINK fleet that are beyond their useful lives with clean-diesel and compressed natural gas buses. This project was selected on a competitive basis through the 2011 State of Good Repair Program.

Illinois Department of Transportation, Statewide: \$3,500,000 in funding for the Illinois Department of Transportation to replace vehicles in rural transit agency fleets that are beyond their useful lives. This project was selected on a competitive basis through the FY 2011 State of Good Repair Program.

## **BoltBus Moving Select Schedules to the New York Port Authority Bus Terminal, Effective Oct. 13**

### ***Service from New York to Boston, Washington, DC and Baltimore/Greenbelt, Md. affected***

DALLAS, Sept. 30, 2011 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- BoltBus today announced that effective Oct. 13; it will relocate select schedules to dedicated gates at the New York Port Authority Bus Terminal. Service from New York to Boston, Washington, DC and Baltimore/Greenbelt, Md. will be affected. The company will continue to provide curbside service to these markets, but it wanted to work with the City of New



York's Department of Transportation to help ease congestion at its curbside locations. The change does not affect Bolt's curbside service to other markets in the Northeast.

"We recognize the need to provide our customers with a premium travel experience, and also support the communities we serve by listening to their concerns," said David Hall, general manager, BoltBus. "We will continue to provide the premium service our customers expect from Bolt at an affordable price."

BoltBus will operate from Gate 84 in the New York Port Authority Bus Terminal, an intermodal facility at the center of Manhattan, providing connections to other modes of transportation. The company will operate up to 20 departures per day from this location, with dedicated customer service staff attending to customers' needs. For more information on the schedule changes, please visit [www.boltbus.com](http://www.boltbus.com).

With BoltBus, customers enjoy a higher level of service with on-board amenities such as comfortable seats, extra leg room, free Wi-Fi and power outlets, with fares starting as low as \$1. A loyalty program, Bolt Rewards, is also available to reward frequent riders with free travel. And customers can feel good about their contribution to a better environment by riding BoltBus. The company is a greener transportation alternative, only operating new low-emission coaches that can take up to 50 cars off the road.

## **Bike-rack push aimed at carrier**

***National coach line cites safety for resistance to make buses more cycle-friendly***

***By Darrell Bellaart, Daily News August 13, 2011***

Nanaimo cyclist Jawn Lafratta is on a mission to make bus coach travel more cycle-friendly. Lafratta wants Greyhound bus lines to fit bicycle carriers on its coaches.

The former Victoria resident wants to make it easier for cyclists to travel with their bikes from one city to another.

When Greyhound didn't go for his plea for bus-mounted bicycle racks last summer, he started quietly collecting signatures to an online petition. In July he contacted Greyhound again, this time with his petition, but the answer remains the same.

Lafratta owns a cycling business and said he could understand if Greyhound expressed cost concerns, but the company has always maintained the racks are unsafe for highway use.

Not surprisingly, Lafratta has the support of the four cycling coalitions on Vancouver Island. Since moving to Nanaimo in 2008, Lafratta routinely travels to Victoria to visit. But to bring his bike along he has to dismantle it, pack it in a box and ship it as cargo for \$30. His passenger ticket costs \$25.

"So there is absolutely no initiative for anyone to take their bike," he said.

Greyhound North America spokesman Timothy Stokes said the company is "not looking into putting bike racks" on its buses at this time.

"It's not a very safe thing, given the speeds and roadways that Greyhound Canada travels on," Stokes said.

Go Transit, the inter-regional public transit system of southern Ontario, resisted adding bike racks for years but in 2008 the political tides changed. Now they are on all Go buses and cyclists can travel between Hamilton and Toronto with their bikes, using a system that transports 57 million passengers a year.

Nanaimo Regional Transit added bike racks in the late 1990s, meeting a B.C. Transit requirement to be cycle-friendly. Users can take their bikes with them anywhere the system goes, from Qualicum Beach to Cedar.

The racks cost \$622 each and by all accounts they are safe on highways.

Darren Marshall, regional transit superintendent of operations said to his knowledge, there has never been a safety problem with the racks since they were installed. They can hold two bikes, which can cause problems if both spaces are filled, but Marshall said a solution is to use rear-mount bike racks which hold more bikes.

The Island Corridor Foundation plans to make commuter trains bike friendly, something Lafratta said Greyhound should heed. Next he plans to lobby politicians to support his cause.

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## **Greyhound looking for new home for bus hub**

**By CHRIS DETTRO**

**THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER**

The Greyhound Bus Lines station at 2351 S. Dirksen Parkway closed more than a year ago, and company officials say they're still looking for a new agent to sell



tickets and serve as a place for passengers to get on and off.

At least one Springfield resident thinks if there's any place in Illinois that should have a Greyhound station, it's the state capital.

The Dirksen Parkway station opened in 1990 after having been on North Ninth Street for 25 years. On March 29, 2010, travelers discovered a "station closed" sign on the front door of the leased building.

Buses still arrive and leave from the station across from the Illinois Department of Transportation Building, but travelers can't go inside, nor can they buy tickets there.

They have to buy tickets online or show a picture ID to the driver and buy a ticket at the next stop.

#### **No timetable**

Greyhound spokesman Maureen Richmond said Greyhound is continuing to search for an agent or "an appropriate location" that is close to the interstate highway and has room for buses to turn around.

In addition to having stand-alone facilities like the station on Dirksen, Greyhound often makes arrangement with some other business to sell tickets and host a bus stop — an agency location.

"There is no timetable at this point," Richmond said.

#### **'Just ridiculous'**

After the Fourth of July holiday, Springfield resident Alyce Lyle said she hopes to start circulating a petition to prod Greyhound into action.

"We just want to get this in motion," she said.

Lyle hopes to get at least 100 signatures on the petition.

"This is the state capital," she said. "It needs a bus station if anyplace does."

She said she is taking a trip to visit her daughter, and her daughter had to buy Lyle a bus ticket in Baton Rouge, La., and mail it to her.

"That's just ridiculous," Lyle said.

Chris Dettro can be reached at 788-1510.

## **Golden Arrow adds it own touches to five new MCI® D4505 coaches**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — August 31, 2011** — Choosing one of the industry's most popular models to serve its diverse clientele, Golden Arrow, a leading Canadian transportation company based in Edmonton, Alberta, has taken delivery of five new MCI D4505 coaches. The company, which serves Alberta with four locations, provides tour and charter coach transportation for tourists, organizations, schools and sports teams, along with long-distance employee shuttle service for the mining and oil industries located in the area.



"We're in a good area for motor coach transportation," says Glen Bartel, President of Golden Arrow, and second-generation family member to run the business. "We have a variety of work, which allows us to stay busy all year long. We like the D4505 for its adaptability. It's an all-around bus that works well in all of our applications."

Golden Arrow's specifications on its new D4505 coaches include seating, with grab rails, for 51 passengers rather than the standard 56-seat configuration, a destination sign and yellow stripes on the entrance steps. The coaches are equipped with a Detroit Diesel engine and Allison transmission, along with the standard safety features of Electronic Stability Control, a SmartWave® tire-pressure monitoring system and an Amerex fire-suppression system.

Golden Arrow was founded in 1965 by Sid and Arlene Bartel, Glen's parents. Today, Golden Arrow has 380 employees and operates a fleet of 53 coaches, including 33 MCI models, as well as 400 school buses. To learn more, visit [goldenarrowtourbus.com](http://goldenarrowtourbus.com).

## **AA Transportation adds another MCI® J4500 to serve its expanding college service**

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — September 9, 2011** — AA Transportation is watching its business on college campuses grow, and that expansion plan is rolling with



MCI. The Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, transportation company recently took delivery of a new MCI J4500 to serve a growing demand from colleges and universities in the Worcester, Massachusetts area, according to Division Manager John Pond. The latest J4500 joins three other coaches in their all-MCI fleet, adds CEO Ron Ernenwein.



"We started out as a school bus company at heart and about 10 years ago we diversified into a few limos and midsize coaches to add some meeting and wedding business," Pond said. "A year and a half ago, we started hearing from our college customers that they were so happy with our service that we should add full-size coaches to our fleet to do more of what they needed."

AA chose the J4500 model with the Cummins engine and the Automatic Allison B500 6-speed automatic transmission. "We serve college and meeting business during the week and use the coaches on the weekend for tours," Pond explained. "I would not buy anything else but MCI. I love the 24-hour road assistance because it gets us out of jams fast. We had a flat tire in New Jersey and we were able to get the bus fixed so quickly the passengers hardly knew we had a problem."

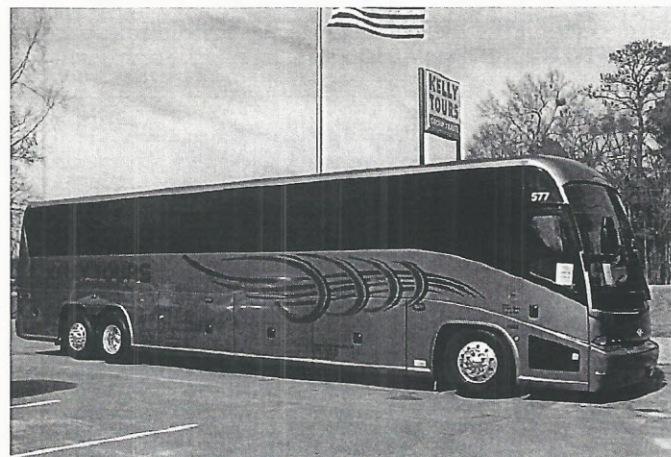
Including school buses, full-size limousines, mid-size and full-size coaches, the 15-year-old AA Transportation operates a fleet of 300 vehicles and employs almost the same number of people. According to Pond, business has been growing at over 10 percent a year thanks to the recent college expansion. Adds Ernenwein, "With the quality of service, we're 100 percent satisfied with MCI."

## Kelly Tours adds a new MCI® J4500 coach to an expanding, diverse business

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — September 23, 2011 —**

Savannah, Georgia-based Kelly Tours has steered through the latest recession by keeping a sharp eye for new markets. That's why its latest MCI J4500 marks the

eightth coach in an in-house coach fleet started only six years ago.



"We used to lease coaches for our tour business before 2005, but we started seeing opportunities in corporate, military and university transport that could support our own fleet," said President Don Adams. "We're now a DOD carrier and we've started to bridge all sorts of gaps in local transportation that have given us steady growth."

In a business that also operates minibuses and sedans, Adams says Kelly is now an all-MCI customer for its coach business. "MCI has outstanding product and service at a fair price," he maintains, adding that the company's newest J4500 has only 52 Amaya seats for "maximum legroom." Kelly's newest coach also features a Cummins ISX engine with an Allison B500 transmission and a specialty exterior that features blue metallic and reflective tape that ensures added visibility during night driving. "We think it looks great, too," Adams adds.

Kelly Tours is in its 17th year of operations and Adams says he's never seen a time where operators have had to be more creative about the markets they serve. "We've organized tours all over the country, but we now serve conventions and major corporate meetings regionally, and that's become very important to us," said Adams. "That's how we've continued to grow through a tough economy. It's just a matter of going to work every day and trying to make people happy."

The company now has more than 50 employees and organizes travel packages around the country and with cruise line giants Royal Caribbean and Carnival. Kelly has also built a business in East Coast school trips and regional college tours for prospective students and their families through Georgia, North and South Carolina and Florida.

The company's website is [www.kellytours.com](http://www.kellytours.com).

## Hawkeye Stages helps passengers travel in style aboard new MCI® J4500



**SCHAUMBURG, IL — October 12, 2011** — Expanding its level of luxury service, Iowa-based Hawkeye Stages has put a third MCI J4500 into its touring fleet. The new 2011 MCI J4500 features a highly upgraded interior chosen to woo discerning passengers.



Offering generous leg room, the coach's 52 passenger seats are crafted of leather with fabric inserts for durability. The MCI coach, which is powered by a clean-diesel Cummins engine and ZF ASTronic transmission, also features a high-end Bosch entertainment system with 15-inch video monitors. Hawkeye Stages additionally installed its own 110-volt outlets and Wi-Fi. "We were looking for a more luxurious coach, one that we could use on our own tours," said Steve Tjossem, president and third-generation leader of the family-owned company. "We spec'd this out to be a little nicer, and it's been very well received."

The MCI J4500 also features standard safety and performance features including electronic stability control, automatic traction control, antilock braking and wide-ride suspension. SmartWave® tire-pressure monitoring and an Amerex fire suppression system add an extra level of safety.

Hawkeye Stages, which bought its first MCI coach in 1980, runs a fleet of 26 coaches. With a history that goes back to 1954, Hawkeye Stages offers charters and luxury tours from several locations in Iowa, including Waterloo, Fort Dodge, Des Moines, Marshalltown and Hawkeye's headquarters in Decorah.

The company's website is [www.hawkeystages.com](http://www.hawkeystages.com).

## Cross Country Trailways Adds 2011 C2045 to Fleet

"We have been very fortunate and blessed to have had a fantastic business for 17 years, and in the first 6 months of 2011 our bookings exceeded our expectations," said Cross Country Trailways Elaine Johnson.



"In this slow economy we've tried a new approach. We're offering our customers new coaches that are 'Over the Top', and this latest 2011 Van Hool C2045 is the second we've taken equipped that way. We are offering our travelers 22" monitors in Van Hool's unique contoured parcel racks, satellite TV, WiFi, leather seat inserts, panoramic rear window and 110 volt outlets at every seat. Repeat business is a key to our success and superior service and coach help assure we get it." The 2011 C2045 has a Cummins engine coupled to an Allison transmission, matching the rest of Cross Country's all Van Hool fleet.

Robert and Elaine Johnson stumbled into the coach business when successful computer executive Robert invested with a friend from their church. The couple ended up owning the company and worked hard as a team to build Cross Country, with Robert holding down two jobs during the early years.

The Spartanburg, SC, based member of Team Trailways has grown from a single used coach purchased in 1994 to a modern fleet of 20 coaches. They now provide charters to 49 states and Canada, as well as offering their own packaged tours. A substantial part of their charter work comes from competing tour brokers, and they work hard at maintaining a cordial relationship.

"Based on their belief in having half their fleet debt free, the Johnsons embarked on a carefully planned strategy of measured growth, careful not to expand beyond their ability to hire good people and provide excellent service," pointed out ABC Account Executive Ryhan Cornell. "ABC is delighted to be partners with them, as they manage to grow in the current environment. Imagine what these folks can do when the economy improves."

Elaine says "I think the best thing we've done was setting our sights on the Van Hool coach, and creating a working relationship with ABC Companies. We've kept our all Van Hool fleet equipped uniformly except for our 2 newest coaches, opting for them to stand out. ABC Bus guided us through the whole purchase. We are just thrilled with our Account Executive, Ryhan Cornell."

"She is a worker, staying in constant touch with us as we waited for our order to be completed. Upon the delivery Ryhan and Roman Cornell were there to make sure we



were totally happy with our purchase before we left Florida. Ryhan really knows how to make a customer feel like family. ABC treats customers the same way Cross Country Trailways does," continued Elaine.

## AllTour America Transportation Adds Ten 2011 C2045's

"This purchase of ten 2011 Van Hool C2045 Coaches may create the appearance that we're expanding rapidly," said AllTour America Transportation's General Manager Fernando Romero, "but that isn't the case. AllTour's growth is carefully planned, and that seems to be paying off."



Orlando, Florida based AllTour currently operates 28 coaches out of 3 locations in Florida and one in California.

"Claudio Cipeda began the company in 2001 to provide reliable luxury transportation for Brazilian travelers to the US. Our goal is to fulfill the vacation and travel dreams of our customers. We're about people, not buses. That commitment to service seems to work, and there has been a snowball effect. Word of mouth about AllTour's quality has created markets for our services in other growing inbound markets, like India, China and Japan. Quality service is an international language."

The ten new coaches reflect that vision by providing Cummins ISM engines driving through Allison B500 GenIV transmissions, custom reflective graphics, upgraded REI video entertainment systems with six 15" monitors, 110 volt outlets, ASA WiFi, Alcoa Durabright aluminum wheels, panoramic rear windows and 3 point seatbelts on all passenger seats.

Romero pointed out, "We are constantly planning ahead, and reviewing what we're doing. We have built a strong, professional management team, who are searching for emerging markets, and ways to effectively serve them. ABC and Van Hool have been key parts of our success. They offer a unique combination of high quality coaches backed by superior service. AllTour is able to concentrate on what we do best - providing service - because we can depend on the equipment and support

ABC provides. The Cornell's, particularly Ryhan and Roman, have always treated us like partners."

"They ARE partners," pointed out Ryhan Cornell. "They do such a fine job of both planning and operating that they make ABC and Van Hool look great. We're grateful for their business, and committed to doing all we can to help them be successful."

## New Flyer Announces its First Bus Sale to a Quebec Customer in Over 40 Years

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, June 21, 2011; New Flyer Industries Inc. (TSX:NFI.UN) ("New Flyer" or the "Company"), the leading manufacturer of heavy-duty transit buses in Canada and the United States, announced today that it has been selected to supply up to 27 heavy duty transit buses for the City of Sorel, Quebec, of which 12 are firm orders and 15 are options. This award marks the first sale of New Flyer low-floor buses to a Quebec-based transit agency since 1970, and is a direct outcome of the appointment of A. Girardin Inc. of Drummondville, Quebec announced on May 3, 2011, to sell and support New Flyer buses in the Province of Quebec.

New Flyer will provide La Régie de la Gare de Sorel the latest generation 40-foot Xcelsior model buses, powered with clean, efficient diesel engines. Girardin will provide local pre-delivery inspection services, field support, and parts support.

"We are absolutely thrilled to have taken this first step toward establishing a New Flyer presence in Quebec, a province in which we have not been able to sell buses for many decades," said Paul Soubry, New Flyer's President and CEO. "We are confident that the New Flyer buses will be well-received and will set a new standard for transit systems and private operators in the region. The combination of New Flyer buses and local Girardin service and support now provides an option for Quebec-based operators. We also believe that the selection of Xcelsior by the Transit Authority in Sorel validates the benefits of this high-quality bus with its light weight design and enhanced styling and maintenance features as well as a reduced operating cost profile so critical to today's transit operators."

Dave Girardin, President and CEO of A. Girardin Inc. added, "The contract for Sorel will help us blaze new frontiers into the heavy-duty segment of this market, just as we had anticipated when we established our alliance with New Flyer less than two months ago. Together, we can bring enhanced value to the Quebec transit operators."

The first buses in this order are scheduled for delivery to Sorel in the fourth quarter of 2011.



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## **NEW FLYER DELIVERS BUSES TO ST. CLOUD**

On June 16, 2010, New Flyer Industries Inc. (TSX:NFI.UN) ("New Flyer" or the "Company"), the leading manufacturer of heavy-duty transit buses in Canada and the United States, presented St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission (Metro Bus) with its four new transit buses. These buses were built at New Flyer's St. Cloud manufacturing plant which employs more than 600 people from the area. In addition, New Flyer has recently relocated three members of its executive team and their families to St. Cloud.

"We are honored to be a part of today's event," said Paul Soubry, New Flyer's President and CEO. "We have been a part of the St. Cloud community for over a decade, we live and work here, and it is great to have partnered with St. Cloud Metro Bus to build these new vehicles."

The event was well attended by business leaders in the St. Cloud community. Speakers included Dave Tripp, Metro Bus Executive Director; Paul Soubry, President and CEO, New Flyer Industries; Paul Ringsmuth, Metro Bus Board Chair; and Dave Kleis, Mayor, City of St. Cloud and Metro Bus Board Member. In addition, representatives from the offices of Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, Senator Al Franken, and Senator Amy Klobuchar delivered remarks.



"On the back of our new buses, we have a decal that says "Hometown Proud, Built in St. Cloud, MN" said Dave Tripp, Metro Bus Executive Director. "That really sums it up for us – New Flyer is a major employer here and our community is proud that these buses were built for St. Cloud by the people of St. Cloud."

St. Cloud Metro Bus has 33 large heavy-duty transit buses and 22 paratransit vehicles in its fleet and reported record ridership levels in 2009. These new buses are 35-foot clean diesel and feature upgraded styling and continuous flush windows. They will be used in regular transit service beginning this summer, replacing aging, less efficient buses.