



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

## **MARCH-APRIL 2012**

**RUN 02-2012**

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.com](http://www.osabus.com)". At [osabus.com](http://www.osabus.com) 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.

### **• MAR/APR MEETINGS**

**The March meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on March 2, 2012, 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 Mike Chmielewski on "CTA".

**The April meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on April 6, 2012, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

Our program for the evening will be a slide presentation by John LeBeau.

## **OSA Happenings**

**2012 dues** for membership in the Omnibus Society of America are now being accepted. Dues for the year are \$30.00 and can be paid in person at any OSA meeting or by sending a check or money order to our post office box.

## **Contractor Approved for Rehabilitation Work at Seven Red Line Stations**

2/8/2012

*Stations to receive a face-lift until rail line's long-term plans are determined*

The Chicago Transit Board today approved the awarding of a design/build contract to Kiewit Infrastructure Co. to rehabilitate the following seven rail stations on the North Main Line branch of the Red Line: Jarvis, Morse, Granville, Thorndale, Berwyn, Argyle and Lawrence.

The work will provide a life-extension for the seven stations until a long-term capital improvement plan is

determined for this portion of the Red Line. Project work will include: viaduct repairs, platform repairs or replacement, station water proofing, lighting improvements and new station house finishes.

"CTA rail stations are a gateway to the surrounding community. These interim improvements are important because we cannot postpone repairs which need our immediate attention. The CTA wants to be good stewards of the infrastructure we have now, as we continue to plan for the future and pursue additional funding," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "This contract will allow us to quickly address some much needed capital maintenance work, while also improving the quality and experience for our riders and neighbors."

The rehabilitation of the seven rail stations is not part of the Red & Purple Modernization Project (RPM), which is currently in the early stages of planning and will require several more years of planning and identified sources of funding.

Kiewit Infrastructure Co. was awarded the contract to through a competitive bid process. Design work is expected to begin in the next few weeks. Per the terms of the contract, construction is expected to conclude in early-2013 and is not to exceed \$57.4 million for services, labor and materials.

Specific scheduling details will be determined over the next few weeks and CTA will coordinate a significant public outreach effort to inform customers and communities of any changes to service. Construction plans do include temporary station closures anticipated to be no more than six weeks. Adjacent stations will not be closed simultaneously. To minimize impact to customers, service reroutes will be scheduled for overnight and weekends only.

Funding for the station rehabilitation project is from the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) and is part of the \$1 billion Red Line investment project. The \$1B capital investment is a combination of state, local and federal funds, which will support other Red Line projects including: track and station renewal along the Dan Ryan branch; the rebuilding of the Clark/Division and Wilson stations; and several other track, substation and station renewal projects along the North Main Line branch.

## **CTA Board Approves Financial Advisors**

2/8/2012

**Firms Will Seek New Funding Options to Improve Red/Purple Lines**



The Chicago Transit Board today approved an agreement to engage financial advisors to pursue innovative, alternative financing options to invest in transit projects in the coming years.

With more than \$5 billion in capital needs envisioned for the Red Line, CTA is taking steps to explore a range of opportunities for revenue, investment and financing, including public-private partnerships that would reduce reliance on traditional funding sources, officials said.

"Traditional federal, state and local funding sources are uncertain, and may be insufficient to meet our needs within the next several years," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "This agreement will allow the CTA to pursue innovative ideas and possible new funding sources to complete some of the important projects we have planned."

Among those projects are the modernization of the Red and Purple Lines north of Belmont (known as Red-Purple Modernization, or RPM) and an extension of the Red Line from 95th Street terminal south to 130th Street.

Public-private partnerships, or P3, could entail transit-oriented development, new non-farebox revenue sources and other ways to capture real-estate value created by the Red Line.

In the first year of the four-year agreement, the financial advisors will not be paid, as they complete an intensive due diligence process to assess how P3 approaches could add value and/or reduce costs for Red Line projects.

The lead financial advisor would be Goldman Sachs, supported by two co-financial advisors -- Chicago-based Loop Capital Markets LLC and Estrada Hinojosa & Company.

They will be paid a monthly fee in the remaining years, as well as small percentage of any successful transactions. The advisors were chosen through a professional services agreement, and their selection was based on their industry expertise and strong experience with P3s, transit finance and municipal financing.

Public-private partnerships have helped improve transit and transportation systems across the country and throughout the world. Notable examples of P3s for transit include the Canada Line in Vancouver and the Docklands Light Railway in London.

In the United States, a key precedent for such deals is the Denver RTD Eagle P3, a \$2 billion new commuter rail project currently under construction. The project represents the first transit public-private partnership in the country in which a private consortium will design, build, finance, operate and maintain a new transit line in return for payments from the public agency based upon performance. The Eagle P3 project is being recognized nationally as a model for efficient transit project delivery, cost control and risk transfer.

## Financial Advisor Fees

The first year of these agreements is free. CTA can terminate the agreements before starting to incur fees if we don't think there are viable P3 opportunities to pursue further. Only if CTA decides to proceed past the first year of work will retainer fees be paid.

### Retainer Fees

Year 1: \$0

Year 2: \$50,000/month for lead advisor; \$4,000/month each for 2 co-advisors

Year 3: \$37,500/month for lead advisor; \$4,000/month each for 2 co-advisors

Year 4: \$25,000/month for lead advisor; \$4,000/month each for 2 co-advisors

### Success Fees—to be paid only if a successful P3 transaction is completed

Lead advisor: 0.375% on first \$2B; 0.25% over \$2B

Co-advisors: 0.0625% on first \$2B; 0.05% over \$2B

These investments are comparatively very small compared to the billions of dollars in much-needed funding CTA would secure to complete these important projects.

## CTA survey seeks public input about "hypothetical fare scenarios"

By Jon Hilkevitch Tribune reporter

6:27 p.m. CST, February 14, 2012

A new CTA survey is seeking customers' opinions on "hypothetical fare scenarios" that include paying up to \$3.50 to ride a bus or a train and up to \$150 for a 30-day pass.

CTA officials said no fare increases are currently being considered. In addition, riders should not be alarmed by the hypothetical fares – in some cases representing "random numbers" and in other instances comparable to current fares – mentioned in the survey, officials said.

"All the hypothetical fare examples are randomly generated for each survey-taker," said CTA spokesman Brian Steele, adding there are more than 200 different fare combinations.

The current basic full fare is \$2.25, or \$2 on a CTA bus if a Chicago Card or Chicago Card Plus card is used. A 30-day full-fare unlimited-ride pass now costs \$86.

"Depending on how a survey respondent answers some questions may determine whether he or she is presented with a scenario about a higher single-ride cost and a lower pass cost, or the opposite scenario, for example," Steele said.



The goal of the survey, which the CTA has conducted about every five years since 1990, is to better understand the fare choices that riders make based on their individual travel patterns, as well as to help the transit agency make decisions about fare-payment options in the future, officials said.

The CTA is working with a contractor to debut an open fare system in 2014. Among the options, an open-fare system would allow riders to pay fares with credit and debit cards and eventually their cell phones. The survey results may be helpful as the CTA creates the new system, officials said.

While rider interest is always high about potential fare changes, most of the survey asks questions about non-fare issues, including basic demographic information, commuting patterns and preferences, when and where CTA customers use the service, why they use public transit, what type of fare cards they use and where they purchase the cards.

But the survey also probes for riders' opinions about whether they would be willing to pay an extra charge, ranging from 25 cents to \$1, to travel during the rush hours of 6 to 9 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. The CTA does not currently charge a premium to ride during peak periods, but such congestion-pricing strategies are used successfully in some cities as an incentive to lure commuters to travel during non-peak hours, when buses and trains are less crowded.

Other questions in the survey ask riders if they would choose a certain type of fare card over another based on the fare amount charged, or whether a \$2 bonus was being offered for every \$20 in fare value purchased. The CTA formerly offered such a 10 percent bonus to users of the Chicago Card and Chicago Card Plus card. The bonus was eliminated with the 2009 fare hikes, except for senior citizens.

Other parts of the survey present scenarios in which the cost of a transfer might be raised to 75 cents or \$1, or even transfers would be provided free of charge. The CTA transfers currently cost 25 cents and are valid for two transfers within two hours of the first boarding. About 1,500 CTA customers were invited via email to take the scientific survey on line starting this week, officials said. An additional 750 participants will be polled as part of a field survey, officials said. The survey is paid for by a U.S. Department of Transportation planning grant. Survey results are expected in the summer. Although paying survey-takers is frowned upon by some polling experts, participants in the CTA survey are given the option to be entered into a drawing for cash prizes up to \$500.

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## **CTA head hopeful for return to bipartisan transit funding**

### **Agency seeks partnerships with private sector**

February 13, 2012|By Jon Hilkevitch, Chicago Tribune reporter

Amid the panic voiced by some public transit supporters over the House Republican transportation plan, the head of the Chicago Transit Authority said he is hopeful about an eventual resolution — probably in 2013 — much closer to the Senate version of the bill.

"My personal opinion is that you have to get through this election," CTA President Forrest Claypool said. "Then, I think, the old, traditional bipartisan approach to transportation comes to the fore again."

"Transportation bills in the past were always one of those places where there was bipartisan cooperation because both Republicans and Democrats always realized how critical improving and maintaining the arteries of commerce are and what that means to jobs and economic activity and business in this country."

But the funding heyday is over for good, Claypool acknowledged.

Claypool said the grim outlook for federal capital-improvement funding in the foreseeable future was a factor in the CTA board's vote last week to hire financial advisers to help line up private-sector investment in major projects.

The advisers will pursue possible alternative financing for the proposed \$1.4 billion Red Line expansion from 95th Street to 130th Street and the modernization of stations, track and viaducts along the Red-Purple Line corridor on the North Side and in Evanston. The Red-Purple modernization, affecting stations from Belmont Avenue north through Evanston, would cost from \$2 billion to more than \$4 billion, depending on the scale of the project, officials said.

The CTA board hired a team headed by Goldman Sachs to explore opportunities for revenue, investment and financing, including partnerships with the private sector, to reduce reliance on traditional funding sources, officials said.

"The cloudy picture in terms of federal commitments long term makes it imperative that we pursue every single alternative funding vehicle to do a project of this magnitude and scope," Claypool said, referring to the Red-Purple modernization.

Until investors sign up and funding is identified, there will be no timetable to start construction on the Red Line extension or the Red-Purple modernization, officials said.

"A lot has to do with the (federal) transportation bill, which in all likelihood is a post-election piece of work," Claypool said.

The House bill would spend \$260 billion on transportation over five years. The Senate is considering a much smaller two-year, \$109 billion bill that doesn't shift as much money from mass transit as the House legislation does.



Some transit advocates say a short-term spending plan may be the best strategy available now and that transit projects will take longer to complete.

"Given the current financial situation of the federal government," Claypool said, "I don't think you are ever going to see a situation again in where there is one massive project pre-funded. What you are going to see is chunks and pieces in that process."

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## Metra Link-Up Pass Price Increases

Effective Wednesday, February 1, the price of Metra's Link-Up Pass increased by \$6 to \$45. The change was instituted by Metra as part of a general fare increase that the commuter rail agency is implementing to close a budget shortfall. The Link-Up pass is available to Metra Monthly Pass holders to use on Pace and CTA buses, with CTA usage restricted to select peak hours on weekdays.

Passengers impacted by the cost increase may wish to consider the PlusBus Sticker. Similar to the Link-Up Pass, it's available to Metra Monthly Pass holders at a cost of just \$30. However, the PlusBus Sticker is not valid for use on CTA. For more information, visit the Fare Information page.

## McRide Service Expands

Effective February 1, McHenry County's McRide service expanded by combining two coordinated dial-a-ride projects into a single, larger system to improve mobility. Combining existing dial-a-rides in and around the cities of Crystal Lake, Woodstock and McHenry, passengers can enjoy simplified travel throughout the service area by calling a single toll-free dispatch number, (800) 451-4599.

Registration is not required, but is encouraged to aid service delivery. The service is available to the general public through most of the affected area, and only to seniors aged 60 and up and people with disabilities in Greenwood Township, McHenry Township (not including the City of McHenry), and unincorporated areas of Dorr Township. The McRide website has additional details regarding eligibility and service area.

Please see the McRide website for information about fares, hours and days of service.

## McHenry County bus program relaunched as MCRide

By Lawrence Synett TribLocal reporter Feb. 3 at 3:28 p.m.

Changes to the McHenry County dial-a-ride program have been met with mixed reviews from commuters dependent on the service for their daily travels.

The bus transit systems in Woodstock, Crystal Lake and McHenry have combined with the county's Tri-City Pilot

program to create MCRide. The new program includes fare changes and attempts to streamline policies.

"Combining dial-a-rides is a way to pool together everyone's resources to be able to provide more services," said Brittany Graham, transportation planner for the county. "Making it all into one service makes it easier for users."

Under the new program, commuters pay a flat rate for the first 5 miles and 25 cents per additional mile. Trips previously cost \$3 for cross-town travelers throughout the service area, and fares differed for those riding within the three communities. Seniors, the disabled and students received a discounted rate.

Woodstock resident Tim Browne uses MCRide for the majority of his transportation needs throughout the county.

The increase "is kind of an inconvenience," he said. "It's hard to wrap my head around all this change. Even a few dollars more a week makes it difficult in today's economic climate."

Rides within Crystal Lake and McHenry now cost \$1.75 for the first 5 miles. Students pay more than double now — \$1.75 as compared to the previous 75 cents. Seniors 60 and older as well as the disabled pay 85 cents, up from 75 cents.

For travels within Woodstock and town to town, commuters pay \$2 for the first 5 miles. That is the same rate for Woodstock users, but a \$1 decrease for county riders. Fares for seniors and the disabled remain the same within Woodstock and decrease for county users to \$1 from \$3. Students pay \$2 from \$1.50 within the city and \$3 across towns, respectively.

"Most trips are less than 5 miles," Graham said. "These are distance-based fares. When you are traveling further it costs more. This is being implemented because longer trips are more expensive to operate."

Residents must now schedule trips at least an hour, but not more than a day before pickup. Previously they were able to reserve a week in advance.

McHenry County College student Dave Smith uses the program to get from his home in rural Woodstock to the community college's Crystal Lake campus.

With the reorganization, Smith saves at least a \$1 each way, but worries the shorter reservation period will mean packed buses.

"I need to know that the bus will be there to pick me up, and being able to book days in advance really put me at ease," he said. "I'm thankful for the improvements, but expect problems."



Graham has fielded several calls from riders with the same concern, adding "we'll have to see how it works out and make improvements from there."

By 2014, all users and students will pay \$2 for the first 5 miles and seniors and disabled riders will pay \$1. It will continue to cost 25 cents per additional mile.

The service now has a single phone number to call after multiple numbers were used because each system operated independently from one another. McHenry, Greenwood and Dorr townships have also been added to the service area. Two children under 7 can ride for free with a paying adult.

Service hours are from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. Pace is the operator of the MCRide service.

The program is funded, in part, by Job Access Reverse Commute and New Freedom federal grants in excess of \$788,000 as well as \$80,000 in senior grant money, which is used to help offset the costs of the service, according to Graham.

[www.twitter.com/lsynett](http://www.twitter.com/lsynett)

## Site for new CTA Yellow Line station in Evanston is proposed

### Panel picks Asbury Avenue just north of Howard Street as best site

By Jonathan Bullington, Chicago Tribune reporter

January 26, 2012

An advisory committee has identified Asbury Avenue just north of Howard Street as the best location for a new CTA Yellow Line station in Evanston.

While Evanston officials think an Asbury station makes the most sense, they reminded residents at a meeting Tuesday that much needs to be done before it gets built.

The city's engineer, Paul Schneider, said the committee's goal was to find a location that has a lot of demand for a station and is the most likely to get funding.

Officials estimate that an Asbury station could cost about \$23 million to build, and \$900,000 annually to operate. Schneider said federal funds could cover as much as 80 percent of the building cost. But he added that it would require "a bit of a sales job" to convince federal officials of the station's merits.

If Evanston secures federal funds, the city would still need to find about \$6 million as a local match, Schneider said. That money could come from the state or from the city, he added — perhaps through creation of a tax increment financing district.

Evanston began looking for a location in 2007, when it joined Skokie and the Regional Transportation Authority

in a project to examine how to expand the Yellow Line. Officials evaluated three possible station locations — on Dodge, Asbury and Ridge avenues.

The Dodge site is near Mulford Street. The Ridge site is between Brummel and Case streets.

Those areas had seen transit stations prior to 1964 and the inception of the Howard-to-Dempster "Skokie Swift" service.

The study found that depending on location, a new station could increase the number of Yellow Line commuters by as much as 45 percent, and attract up to 1,000 riders per day.

In the course of three public meetings, the advisory committee — comprising citizens and Evanston officials — presented the pros and cons of each location and gathered feedback from residents.

A primary benefit of choosing Asbury is the positive effect a new CTA station could have on the surrounding area, officials said.

"The area along Howard near Asbury ... could be the focus of future redevelopment efforts," said Tom Coleman, a consultant with Parsons Brinckerhoff.

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## Greyhound adds Dallas-Houston express route

Houston Business Journal

Date: Tuesday, February 14, 2012, 1:16pm CST - Last Modified: Tuesday, February 14, 2012, 3:41pm CST

Greyhound Lines Inc. is expanding its service routes in Texas by adding a new Greyhound Express route between Dallas and Houston.

The new service, which has fares starting at \$1, will begin on Feb. 29.

Like all Greyhound Express buses, the Houston-Dallas buses will have free WiFi, power outlets, extra legroom and leather seats.

Although Greyhound is based in Dallas, this is the first time the bus transportation service has offered express routes to and from Houston and its headquarters city.

## Greyhound Opens New Location

by Tim Wetzel

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Greyhound bus lines moved into a brand new high tech terminal in downtown Nashville Thursday morning.

The bus station officially opened at 8 a.m. They moved all of their buses overnight to their new state of the art 8,500 square foot facility on Fifth Avenue South at Lafayette Street.

The building is made out of recycled materials, features LED lights, as well as devices to cut down on water usage.



It also features a restaurant inside. Greyhound now offers on Wi-Fi on their buses as well as more leg room in an effort to get more riders.

Nashville Mayor Karl Dean said Greyhound's new location provides a better image for Nashville.

"This new beautiful facility says great things about Greyhound's commitment to being a good neighbor and a great corporate citizen. As we continue to see Nashville's skyline change with the latest addition of the Music City Center it is so exciting to see companies like greyhound step up and make good decisions that compliant the community's investment and will impact our city for years to come," said Mayor Dean during Wednesday's dedication ceremony.

The state is the third LEED-certified Greyhound terminal in North America.

The old bus station inside an old car dealership on Charlotte Avenue was scheduled to close Thursday morning and caused some confusion among passengers and employees on which busses were leaving where and when.

Despite early morning hiccups Greyhound said they are proud of their new building.

Greyhound's original location at Eighth and Demonbreun was demolished to make way for the new Music City Center Convention Center.

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## Hammond Greyhound station closes; stops continue

By Keith Benman [keith.benman@nwi.com](mailto:keith.benman@nwi.com), (219) 933-3326 [nwi.com](http://nwi.com) | Posted: Monday, January 30, 2012 11:00 am

The Greyhound bus station in Hammond closed Saturday, January 28, leaving Gary's Metro Center as the last place in Lake County where riders can buy tickets and wait for buses protected from the elements.

Greyhound buses will continue to stop in front of the former Hammond station at 3600 Calumet Avenue, but the station itself will remain closed, Greyhound spokesperson Timothy Stokes confirmed Monday. Almost 20 buses a day stop at the location coming in and out of Chicago.

Riders and others say the station will be missed, marking the end of Greyhound's more than 50-year station presence in Hammond.

"A lot of elderly people that did come through won't be able to go there anymore, or they'll have to stand outside in the winter waiting for their bus," said John Klut, of Hammond, whose wife worked at the Hammond station.

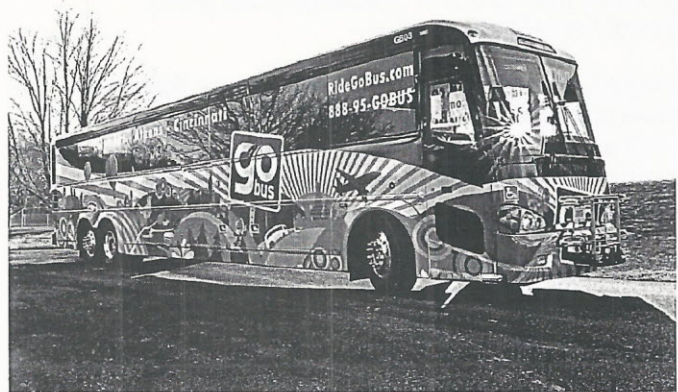
Sales of Internet tickets continue to affect local agent bus stations, which earn commissions on ticket sales, Klut said. He also said Greyhound tickets ordered online

can now be purchased at 7-Eleven convenience stores, which also hurt sales at the station.

The nearest Greyhound stations still selling tickets and taking package shipments are the Metro Center station at 100 W. 4th Avenue and the one at 14 W. 95th St., in Chicago. Riders can also wait at the Broadway Cafe, at 1805 Northland Drive, in Valparaiso, but there are no ticket sales or package shipping there.

## Low-cost bus veers eastward

The local GoBus transportation service expanded its destinations eastward yesterday (Feb. 1) to include Marietta, Parkersburg, W.Va., and Coolville in Athens County.



GoBus currently offers transportation between Athens, Columbus and Cincinnati with nine other stop locations along U.S. Rt. 33 and Ohio Rt. 32/U.S. Rt. 50 for \$10 one-way.

Passengers are able to travel to the new locations — Coolville, Marietta and Parkersburg — for \$5 one-way, plus tax and fees.

In a press release, Hocking Athens Perry Community Action said that by expanding its service, GoBus will enable southeast Ohioans greater access to urban centers and in turn the rest of the state and nation by providing a wide range of meaningful connections with Lakefront Lines, Greyhound, Port Columbus Airport, and other national and local transportation services.

"With the new service, residents will also be able to access national transportation services traveling I-77 to locations such as Cleveland, Charleston, W.Va., and Columbia, S.C.," the release stated.

GoBus has been in operation for a little over a year. The release said that the service has become very popular among community member and area college students.

"In 2011, more than 30,000 passengers used this safe, convenient and affordable service," the release said.

According to the release, every GoBus coach is equipped with air conditioning, an on-board restroom, reclining leather seats with headrests, footrests, Wi-Fi, tinted windows and outlets at every seat "to ensure a luxurious and comfortable ride."



The GoBus project is funded with stimulus money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, funneled through the Federal Transit Administration, Conley has stated previously. The program puts \$300,000-plus annually into the local economy through services such as marketing, printing, design work, stop-location service fees and other things, all using local companies, she added. ODOT contracted with Lakefront Lines in 2010 to operate the buses for \$1.4 million, with an in-kind match from Greyhound Lines for \$1.4 million, which was slated to fund the operation for four years.

Carolyn Conley, GoBus manager at HAPCAP, has said that Lakefront used to operate its own service from Athens to Columbus, and in 2010 they had 3,022 riders. Although that service was once per day and just to Columbus, that figure suggests how successful GoBus has been, she said, considering it has had over 30,000 passengers.

For more information or to purchase tickets visit the GoBus website at [www.RideGoBus.com](http://www.RideGoBus.com) or call 888-95-GoBus. Each one-way ticket is \$10 or less, not including tax and fees.

## Megabus Gets a Free Ride at Port Authority Bus Terminal

February 8, 2012 5:37pm | By Mathew Katz, DNAinfo Reporter/Producer

HELL'S KITCHEN — Discount carrier Megabus will soon be picking up passengers from the Port Authority Bus Terminal — but it won't have to pay a cent to be there.

That's a far cry from the \$10 million that three of the company's competitors say they have to fork over every year to operate out of the Midtown depot.

Megabus' new pickup spot is on the south side of West 41st Street, between Eighth and Ninth avenues, which is straddled by the bus station. But because it's a city street, the company won't have to pay to be there, according to city Department of Transportation policy.

The new stop is outside the terminal because the company's double-decker coaches — which a recent report said are too heavy for city streets — can't fit in the station itself.

Megabus' rivals slammed the move in a Feb. 5 letter to Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

"By issuing the proposed permit for no charge, New York City would be providing an unfair competitive advantage to Megabus while decreasing revenue to the Port Authority," read the letter from the Coalition of Port Authority Carriers, which includes Adirondack Trailways, Greyhound, and Peter Pan.

"We ask for a level ground to compete rather than having the city show preference to one business over another."

A spokesman for the DOT said it met with the Port Authority numerous times about the stop. The location is

away from businesses and homes and sees few pedestrians, he said.

The department doesn't charge for a permit, but can revoke it if it finds out Megabus is breaking the rules it sets out, the spokesman added.

The city has been hesitant to charge bus companies for curbside pickup because it lacks authority to regulate interstate commerce. A bill currently making the rounds in Albany would give the city the power to regulate the industry.

Megabus currently pays fees to local governments to provide curbside pickups in other cities, but did not have to pay the city to operate out of its old hub, at West 33rd Street and Ninth Avenue. Rivals say the plum spot next to the Port Authority gives Megabus all the benefits of being located in the bus hub.

"Nobody's charged for those pickups and we have objected to that for a long time," said Christine Berthet, who runs the Clinton Hell's Kitchen Coalition for Pedestrian Safety.

"The other people are playing by the rules and they are not."

## Classic Charter offers a greener ride, more luxury with newest MCI® J4500 SCHAUMBURG, IL — February 8, 2012 —

Chris Riddington sees it all the time: "A passenger steps onto one of our coaches, takes a look around and says, 'This sure isn't the bus I rode to college!'"



It's a frequent experience for Riddington, president of Visalia, California-based Classic Charter. "People are turning over a whole new leaf when it comes to motor coach travel because now they can do it in style and go green."

That's why Riddington is particularly excited about Classic Charter's newest MCI J4500, the first in its all-MCI coach fleet to feature 2010 EPA-compliant engine technology. Classic's newest coach is even greener than previous models, offering near-zero emissions.

"Between 2013 and 2023, all coaches in California will need to meet new emission standards and our newest J4500 is our first step in converting to an all-green fleet," said Riddington.



What the passenger will see first, however, is pure luxury. Built by MCI, the J4500 coach experience starts with its patented spiral stairway and full-kneeling suspension that makes boarding easy for all ages. Once passengers are seated, they get to enjoy scenery-sized windows and tiered theatre seating that assures panoramic views for the entire ride.

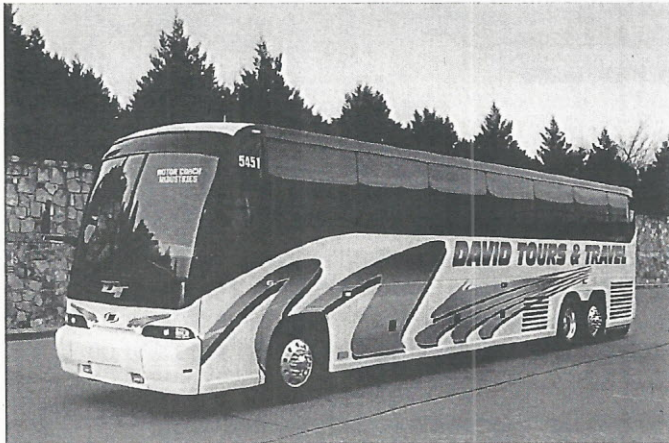
Classic Charter's latest J4500 carries 58 passengers, features three-point seatbelts and offers 110-volt outlets at every seat. The result is easier work and play for business, school and group clients. "As long as you give them good service and a well-built coach, it really opens people's eyes to the pleasure of going by coach," says Riddington.

Classic Charter's first coach was an MC-5 and it's stayed with MCI models ever since. "It's about the reliability and good service. We're old school — I grew up with MCI and we want to stay with it," said Riddington, whose father Les Riddington founded the company in 1985. Today Classic Charter employs 75 workers and Riddington's mother and wife also work at the company.

Classic Charter's website is [www.classiccharter.com](http://www.classiccharter.com).

## David Thomas Tours new MCI® E4500 showcased at ABA Marketplace

**SCHAUMBURG, IL — January 18, 2012 —** David Thomas Tours, Philadelphia, new MCI E4500 was one of two MCI models showcased at the American Bus Association's annual Marketplace held in Grapevine, Texas, January 6 through January 11. The MCI E4500 is MCI's top of the line — flagship model — known for its stylish good looks and ergonomic entryway featuring grab rails and a spiral stairwell for easy passenger boarding.



David Thomas Tours new MCI E4500 is equipped with a Cummins engine featuring clean diesel technology for near zero emissions. The coach also features an array of luxury amenities and a premium entertainment system. It also has a smooth ride and exceptional turning radius.

Aiming for the top is nothing new for this premier tour company founded by David Benedict. With a total of 25

vehicles (including MCI E4500 and MCI D4005 models), David Tours has been growing since 1997, when it bought its first tour coach. The company is also particular about its drivers, requiring excellent driving records and top customer service credentials.

Another big part of Benedicts' formula for success is tours. David Thomas Tours affiliate company David Tours & Travel, runs tours throughout the Mid Atlantic and is renowned for offering its customers perennial favorites trips. To learn more visit [www.davidtours.travel](http://www.davidtours.travel).

## Sun Diego adds eight 2012 Van Hool C2045s to fleet.

"My wife Bev and I started Sun Diego in 1997 with 2 mini buses and 2 MC-9's hoping that we could provide superior service to the San Diego market. It didn't take us long to realize that in order to compete with the larger operators we needed to have newer more modern equipment... enter ABC Bus."



Their recent purchase of eight 2012 Van Hool C2045's brings their fleet size to 53 motorcoaches. In addition they operate 3 mini-coaches and 3 limousines. One of the coaches is an 81 passenger Van Hool TD925 that Sun Diego offers to customers with large groups. The Double Deck offers a unique luxury experience for their customers, while being substantially less expensive to operate than the 2 coaches normally required for 81 customers.

Sun Diego operates 41 scheduled routes to casinos, as well as providing transportation to the military, luxury charter service, convention shuttles and contract work. "Our core philosophy has always been to offer the very best in customer service by providing ultra clean late model equipment operated by well-trained professional drivers, and backed by a strong Sales and Operations team," says Rich Illes of Sun Diego Charter Company ([www.sundiegocharter.com](http://www.sundiegocharter.com)).

Driven by a Detroit Diesel DD13 engine coupled to an Allison B500 Gen4 transmission, seven of the new coaches are ADA accessible, and all have REI Entertainment systems, Sun Diego's unique full wrap



graphics package and Van Hool's unique spiral entrance area.

According to ABC Senior Account Executive Charlie Walser, "We saw the Illes' as winners from the get-go. They've really 'upped the game' in their market. They've got a recipe for success that seems to work in both good times and bad. Sun Diego is great at maintaining relationships with their customers. They run the largest, most modern fleet in San Diego. Their spectacular new facility is symbolic of the commitment they have for our business, their employees and their clientele. They are a huge credit to the coach industry and IMG."

Illes pointed out, "ABC Bus and Charlie have always been there for us when we have needed them. There have been many times where they have gone above and beyond for us where other vendors would most definitely not have. We feel very lucky to have such a great relationship with Charlie and ABC, and they have definitely played a role in Sun Diego's success."

## **DC Trails takes delivery of four 2012 Van Hool C2045's**

"Our market here in Washington, DC, is doing a bit better than some parts of the country," pointed out DC Trails, William Torres. "That helps get people on our coaches the first time and we keep them coming back by working hard at customer service. My wife, Liliana, and I, as well as every member of DC Trails staff are completely 'hands on'."



According to ABC's Senior Account Executive, Claude Payne, "At a time when many fleets find it necessary to cut back, or delay updating their fleets, the Torres have purchased seven new Van Hool coaches this year. Not only does it show they know how to run an excellent bus line, but their willingness to invest in quality service by buying luxurious new coaches is a clear indication of how committed they are to providing their customers with a great experience."

The four recently delivered 2012 Van Hool C2045 coaches are powered by Cummins ISX engines coupled to Allison B500G4 transmissions. The 57 passenger

seats are equipped with European standard 3 point seat belts and footrests. In addition, the coaches have REI Elite Entertainment systems with six 15.4" monitors, Alcoa Dura Bright aluminum wheels, and an ASA backup camera. These four coaches follow three high end Van Hool T2145L luxury coaches delivered earlier in the year.

Lorton, VA, based DC Trails owners William and Liliana Torres have built a fleet of nearly 60 coaches in less than 10 years.

In addition to a passionate commitment to service, William attributes their success to the fact that he and Liliana have more than 50 years experience in the coach business and have been careful to diversify the company. In addition to sightseeing tours and airport transfers, they provide charters throughout the Eastern Seaboard and Canada. They handle groups from 36 to 61 passengers and also operate scheduled service.

"ABC has been a great fit for DC Trails. Our customers, drivers and technicians love the Van Hool coaches. ABC is a bit like our company, in that they are multifaceted and able to help us in so many ways, from quality service and parts support to the fact that Claude Payne, our Account Executive, is a bit like a consultant. It's a partnership that has served us well."

## **Megabus.com to return to Louisville**

LOUISVILLE, KY. (WDRB) -- Megabus.com is driving back into Louisville. It will offer daily, express bus service to and from Chicago, Indianapolis, and Nashville.

The bus will pick and drop off passengers on Liberty Street just before 5th Street. The service starts March 14th, but customers can begin booking travel right now.

Megabus stopped its service in Louisville in 2007. Megabus.com is a subsidiary of Coach USA, one of the largest intercity express bus service providers in North America.

## **Megabus to bypass Erie beginning in March**

BY VALERIE MYERS, Erie Times-News  
valerie.myers@timesnews.com

The Megabus calendar ends on March 13, at least for bookings to and from Erie.

That's because the big blue Megabus will make its last Erie stops that day.

The discount motor coach company is ending service between Pittsburgh and Toronto, including stops in Erie and Buffalo, because not enough people are riding, a Megabus spokeswoman said.

"We're operating at about 25 percent full over the entire route. It really needs to be double that to make it worthwhile for us," said Bryony Chamberlain, director of



Megabus.com, where passengers can still book trips to and from Erie through March 13.

The company could have raised fares to compensate for low passenger numbers, but did not.

"That goes against our philosophy of offering low-cost fares," Chamberlain said.

Megabus, a subsidiary of Coach USA, offers fares as low as \$1, plus a 50-cent booking fee, for intercity travel. The Pittsburgh-Erie-Buffalo-Toronto route was launched as a kind of test balloon in May, Chamberlain said.

"When we put that service on, we weren't sure there would be enough people there to warrant the service. We tried it, and, unfortunately, it didn't work out," Chamberlain said.

The service worked out perfectly for Rachel Marz, 26, who has ridden the Megabus between Erie and Washington, D.C., at least monthly since accepting a job in Washington last fall.

"Since that can get expensive and is time consuming, I found Megabus to be a great option for me," Marz said in an e-mail interview Wednesday. "I was able to take a Megabus from Washington to Pittsburgh overnight and get on another Megabus in Pittsburgh headed to Erie, and I saved money and was able to travel through the night so I didn't lose any days traveling."

Marz comes home to reconnect with family, friends and her hometown. She's planning another visit in mid-March, and will either ride the Megabus to Pittsburgh and buy a more expensive Greyhound ticket to Erie; will fly, if she finds an inexpensive flight; or will drive home, spending more money on gasoline than she would have spent on Megabus fare.

"My traveling life was a lot easier with Megabus," Marz said.

## **Toledo-Ann Arbor service to be added by Megabus**

### **Route to start in March, run via Detroit, take 2 1/2 hours**

Bus rides from Toledo to Ann Arbor soon will be available for as little as \$1.50, albeit on a 2-1/2-hour route via Detroit.

**Megabus.com**, the discount intercity bus operator that has grown rapidly in the Northeastern and Great Lakes states with its rock-bottom promotional fare and on-board wireless Internet service, will extend one of its routes through Toledo to Ann Arbor on March 14. The carrier began taking reservations for the extended route last week.

Megabus buses running between Detroit and Chicago already stop at the State Street park-and-ride lot on the

University of Michigan campus, and extending a Pittsburgh-Detroit route that also stops in Cleveland and Toledo is a response to rider demand, said Bryony Chamberlain, the company's director of operations.

"We'd had a lot of requests from students at the university in Ann Arbor," she said.

The route will start with one round trip daily, leaving Toledo at 11:30 a.m. and arriving in Ann Arbor at 2:05 p.m., then leaving Ann Arbor at 3:30 p.m. and stopping in Toledo at 6:05 p.m.

Stops are scheduled en route at Detroit's Rosa Parks Transit Center, 360 Michigan Ave., and at Warren and Cass avenues, near Wayne State University.

As with all other Megabus routes, a limited number of seats on the Pittsburgh-Ann Arbor buses will be sold for \$1, plus a 50-cent reservation fee. The number of bargain seats on each bus varies between one and seven, depending on anticipated demand for a particular trip, Ms. Chamberlain said.

The top fare for Toledo-Ann Arbor will be \$15 when service begins -- the same as the top Megabus fare between Toledo and Detroit.

The top fare between Toledo and Cleveland now is \$1 higher than Ann Arbor to Cleveland; the top fare from Ann Arbor to Pittsburgh will be \$21 to start.

"The fares vary depending on date of booking versus the date of travel, and how full the bus is," Ms. Chamberlain said. "The further out you book, the better the deals."

The higher top fare to get to Cleveland from Toledo instead of Ann Arbor is a quirk of the company's system for predicting demand for unsold seats, she said.

Megabus began service on the Chicago-Toledo-Cleveland route in September, 2006, stopping next to the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority park-and-ride lot at the former Southwyck Shopping Center.

With Southwyck having since closed, Megabus now stops on the opposite side of Southwyck Boulevard, between Reynolds Road and Cheyenne Boulevard. The buses run to Chicago and Cleveland three times per day on and near the weekends and twice daily mid-week, when travel is lighter.

The Pittsburgh-Detroit route, also stopping on Southwyck Boulevard, began last May and currently runs once a day each way, although Ms. Chamberlain said Megabus can add extra buses or trips on any of its routes if demand appears high.

"Every schedule is constantly monitored for capacity, both through the system and through staff checks. This allows us to increase schedules and manipulate fares hour to hour so that we can carry the most people in a cost-efficient manner," the spokesman said.

"We can keep our fares down and still react to big changes in the traveling public's requirements day to day, unlike an operator who has published timetables



and fares that they stick to for the next six months," she said.

About 45,000 people used the buses to or from Toledo last year, Ms. Chamberlain said. Reservations for all trips must be made in advance, over the Internet; Megabus.com does not have ticket offices and drivers do not handle cash fares.

Contact David Patch at: [dpatch@theblade.com](mailto:dpatch@theblade.com) or 419-724-6094.

## **Megabus to begin service to and from Saratoga Springs**

*The Saratogian*

SARATOGA SPRINGS — The popular low-fare bus service Megabus is soon scheduled to make stops in the Spa City.

The bus line, which makes stops in 70 cities including New York, Boston and Philadelphia, is adding service between Saratoga Springs and New York City and Burlington, Vt.

The company announced Thursday that trips between Burlington and Saratoga Springs will begin daily April 2. Fares start at \$1 and get higher as the travel date approaches.

Tickets between Saratoga Springs and Burlington, Vt. and New York City are available on Megabus.com beginning April 2.

## **Megabus puts Akron in rear-view mirror in March**

By Jim Mackinnon  
Beacon Journal business writer

Published: January 19, 2012 - 12:09 AM

Megabus is pulling out of Akron after less than a year here.

The discount city-to-city passenger bus service, which advertises one-way fares as low as \$1, says it hasn't been getting enough customers for daily travel to and from Akron to justify staying.

The company says it is keeping its other Ohio routes that include Cleveland, Toledo, Columbus and Cincinnati.

"We'll be discontinuing Pittsburgh to Akron as of March 13," said Dale Moser, company president. "It wasn't developing and there wasn't enough demand."

Megabus will continue to provide service to customers who bought tickets for trips to and from Akron through the last scheduled ride in March, Moser said.

"We gave it a year," he said. "Sometimes that's what happens."

Megabus started its Akron service in May at the Akron Metro Transit Center off Broadway downtown.

The company books rides on 55-seat coach buses to and from Pittsburgh and Cleveland. The buses offer free Wi-Fi computer service, power outlets and restrooms.

Travelers booked trips through the company website, [megabus.com](http://megabus.com). Ticket prices vary according to such things as how early a reservation was made, destination, time and seat availability.

The website is not booking travel to and from Akron after March 13. As of mid-Wednesday afternoon, it offered a ride March 13 from Akron to Pittsburgh at a price of \$8 and a 5 p.m. ride from Pittsburgh to Akron for \$1.

Akron service was started when Megabus expanded its Pittsburgh hub.

Megabus's parent company is New Jersey-based Coach USA, which in turn is owned by Stagecoach Group in Scotland.

Megabus executives could restart service to Akron at some point if they think there are enough riders, Moser said.

"Maybe we'll do something in the future," he said.

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## **Megabus now stops in Montgomery**

Updated: Friday, 03 Feb 2012, 9:23 AM CST  
Published: Friday, 03 Feb 2012, 9:23 AM CST

Megabus.com, the express bus company, is now giving people in Mobile a ride to Montgomery. Previously service was only between Mobile and Atlanta.

Now, there are three daily departures between Atlanta, Mobile and Montgomery.

Megabus.com fares start as low as \$1 and get higher as the travel date nears.

"Megabus.com has rapidly become the travel option of choice for millions of people and today we're excited to provide service between Mobile and Montgomery," said Dale Moser, president and COO of megabus.com.

"As Americans continue to look for ways to stretch their income, we will continue to provide safe, convenient and affordable travel."

Log on to [www.megabus.com](http://www.megabus.com) for more information about service and schedules.

## **MO: Articulated Buses are on Way for Busy Routes**

By Ken Leiser, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Feb. 05--Imagine long, articulated buses churning up and down Grand Boulevard -- the St. Louis region's busiest line -- where buses often are standing room only.



**Omnibus Society of America**  
**PO Box A3051**  
**Chicago IL 60690**

If you're a commuter, you may someday be able to take buses up and down major interstate highway corridors that tie the suburbs to downtown St. Louis.

Be prepared to welcome bus rapid transit, as it is often called. It is sort of a cross between traditional bus service and commuter rail. Instead of tracks, however, these transit vehicles run on rubber tires along dedicated stretches of road.

Last month, the region's main planning agency -- the East-West Gateway Council of Governments -- signed off on Metro's plan to order four articulated buses that are likely to debut on the Grand line. The council approved a \$250,000 study of transit options on Interstate 55 between St. Louis and Arnold.

"Something is indeed happening," said Jessica Mefford-Miller, Metro's chief of planning and system development.

First, Metro and other transportation officials plan to move forward with a study of the four major highway corridors. Grand won't be part of this study, Mefford-Miller said. But the heavily used bus line is expected to be the first to use articulated buses.

Metro sought funding for up to 15 of these longer, segmented buses.

"Our intention is for Grand to be the first route to deploy articulated buses and that could morph" into bus rapid transit, she said.

As for the wider use of the bus rapid transit, that will depend on what the study turns up and the availability of federal funding once it is complete.

In its 2010 regional transit plan titled Moving Transit Forward, Metro said bus rapid transit runs at higher speeds and with fewer stops than traditional buses. The buses traditionally run on dedicated lanes, bypass lanes and separate "busways."

Based on Metro's 2010 plan, we should be expecting the region's first two bus rapid transit routes within the next few years. Other cities -- including Kansas City, Charlotte and Cleveland -- have launched bus rapid transit systems, Metro officials say.

Mefford-Miller said the study should begin in April, then take about a year to wrap up.

Beyond that, it will take a blessing from the Federal Transit Administration to move bus rapid transit closer to reality.

While this form of bus transit is less costly than building light-rail, Metro will continue to study additional MetroLink extensions, Mefford-Miller said.

Those studies will proceed, she said, on a different track.