



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

MAY-JUNE 2012

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

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

Visit the Omnibus Society of America website at "www.osabus.com". At 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.

• MAY/JUNE MEETINGS

The May meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on May 4, 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 noted transit photographer Tom Poliak of Milwaukee

The June meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on June 1, 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 digital presentation by Daniel Joseph.

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.

Mayor, CTA privately talked about \$300 million no-bid deal

Plans fell through after disclosures about poor quality work surfaced

April 12, 2012/By Jon Hilkevitch and David Kidwell, Chicago Tribune reporters

The Emanuel administration and the CTA engaged in private discussions on a \$300 million no-bid contract with the maker of the transit agency's new rail cars, but the talks collapsed amid disclosures about the poor quality of the company's work, the Tribune has learned.

Bombardier Transportation's pitch to build and operate a South Side rail car overhaul facility on vacant city and CTA land in a CTA rail yard took off in May 2011 after Mayor

Rahm Emanuel was elected, CTA officials told the newspaper.

The talks over the public-private partnership continued for 10 months, "in keeping with the mayor's priority of creating jobs and generating economic development," CTA spokeswoman Molly Sullivan said.

CTA lawyers had been working to justify the unusual practice of awarding such a large contract without competitive bids, the transit agency said.

But the city and CTA backed away from the talks in recent weeks amid Tribune reports that disclosed defective-parts problems with Bombardier's ongoing production of 706 new rail cars under a contract that totals \$1.14 billion.

First word of the previously undisclosed discussions with Bombardier comes as Emanuel is asking the City Council to give him broad authority to partner with the private sector to build everything from schools and sewers to ports and railways. The details uncovered by the newspaper highlight both the potential benefits and pitfalls of such public-private partnerships.

A vote on the mayor's proposal to create an "infrastructure trust" could come as soon as next week. Emanuel's plan calls for a panel of business experts appointed by him who would identify infrastructure projects that would be built for the city and find ways to fund them other than the traditional practice of government borrowing money and paying off the debt with taxes. The panel's meetings and deliberations would not be subject to open meetings or public records laws.

Emanuel's press office repeatedly refused to answer questions about what involvement the mayor had in the Bombardier discussions. On Tuesday his top spokeswoman would only acknowledge the mayor was initially attracted to the Bombardier plan because of potential jobs. She said the mayor soured on the idea because of the no-bid aspect, without saying when that happened.

"The mayor doesn't do sole-source deals," said Emanuel communications director Sarah Hamilton. "It was a nonstarter. It was never going to happen."

CTA officials said the no-bid component had nothing to do with scuttling the deal and that Emanuel had encouraged it all along.

"Very early, even before he took office, he asked me how we might turn this billion-dollar expenditure into an opportunity for jobs," said CTA President Forrest Claypool,

who was appointed to the post shortly after Emanuel's inauguration. "So when I took office we took that mandate and ran with it."

Claypool described the Bombardier proposal as a "very, very rare potential for a win-win. The goal was a noble one."

As recently as November, a top Bombardier executive who was in Chicago for what was billed as the official rollout of the rail cars discussed with an enthusiastic Emanuel the company's plans to build the repair facility, according to a CTA source.

The CTA routinely seeks competitive bids on major projects, but Sullivan said the agency had compelling economic reasons to consider dealing exclusively with Bombardier.

Because there are no Chicago facilities equipped to perform midlife overhauls on rail cars, the CTA has to pay to send its aging cars elsewhere, Sullivan said. The Bombardier proposal would have saved the CTA those shipping costs while creating much-needed jobs on the South Side.

The Montreal-based company proposed building the facility on its own at the CTA's 63rd Street Lower Yard at Calumet Avenue in the Washington Park neighborhood, on land it would lease from the city and transit agency for as little as \$1 a year.

In return, the company would be awarded a multiyear, \$300 million contract to update 20-year-old rail cars at the facility, CTA officials confirmed. The yard is adjacent to the CTA Green Line East 63rd branch tracks and nearby freight main lines.

By allowing Bombardier to use proprietary information to create a uniform rail car design, the CTA's older trains from another maker would be configured with many of the same technical specifications on the new trains from Bombardier — resulting in greater operational and maintenance efficiencies, Sullivan said.

As an added economic incentive, the repair shop could attract business from the state of Illinois and possibly surrounding states, which are planning to buy 110 mph passenger trains for Amtrak routes. Bombardier was recommending that a maintenance yard at the Chicago hub of Midwest operations would be needed to service the high-speed trains, according to CTA officials who were close to the talks with Bombardier.

Bombardier was also offering a separate deal to maintain its new cars after the warranty expires, Sullivan confirmed. The work would have been done by Bombardier at the CTA's 54th Avenue maintenance yard on the Pink Line.

That option "would have enabled some additional local hires working out of our facility," Sullivan said. "But the concept was ultimately not accepted."

The discussions about the potential partnership had not been formally presented to the CTA board. Sullivan said

the agency made a decision to back away because of a number of factors. They included the defective rail cars, the need to get the problems fixed so the cars could be used and the potential cost of the deal — no final price had been agreed to.

Emanuel was on board with the talks until the revelations over the defective parts made headlines, according to sources close to the top CTA management and CTA Law Department officials involved in the negotiations between the transit agency and Bombardier.

A Bombardier spokeswoman declined to answer questions about the specifics of the talks, saying only that it's common for the company to make pitches to customers for additional services like the option the CTA considered.

"We are here to help our customers in any way we can with services that include overhauling parts and spare-parts agreements," said Bombardier's Maryanne Roberts.

The company first presented its idea in 2010, when Richard Daley was mayor. CTA board Vice Chairman Jacquelyne Grimshaw said she learned informally about the repair yard project around that time but was unaware it had progressed so far with the new administration.

"No one has told me it has fallen through," Grimshaw said. "If it's dead, it was obviously done through Forrest (Claypool) or Rahm."

As small problems with the new Bombardier rail cars spiraled into bigger problems, CTA broke off the negotiations on the overhaul facility, Sullivan said. Asked when that occurred, she said, "It was recently — I don't know the exact date."

The Tribune reported on March 8 that Bombardier had installed defective parts made in China on the first 54 of the new rail cars. The flaws in the wheel assemblies, which potentially could have led to derailments, prompted the CTA to take the cars out of service in December.

Bombardier said it has since hired new parts suppliers and improved its quality control and oversight of the CTA contract. Production of new cars at its Plattsburgh, N.Y., plant resumed March 28, according to Bombardier.

The CTA expects to reintroduce the new cars next month, transit officials said.

Some CTA veteran rail managers said they are glad the maintenance deal with Bombardier collapsed, even though it could have made Chicago the Midwest's high-speed rail maintenance center. The plan was marred by logistical complications that were raised by CTA rail staff and largely ignored by CTA top management, according to one of the CTA officials close to the Bombardier talks.

"We were concerned that all these legitimate concerns would be pushed aside because of politics and (the prospect of new) jobs," said the CTA official.

The rail managers who were critical of the plan said the 63rd Street yard is too far from downtown, making it a hassle to reach from some of the CTA rail lines, and does not have enough space for a test track where trains could be evaluated.

Meanwhile, Bombardier has in recent weeks rehired Avis LaVelle, a public relations consultant and longtime City Hall insider who also represented the company in 2006 and 2007 when it was negotiating the rail car contract.

"My firm was engaged to increase Bombardier's visibility, put out positive information and ensure that people understand we build a quality product and that safety is the primary objective," said LaVelle, who worked for Mayors Harold Washington and Richard M. Daley and was appointed to the Chicago Park District Board by the current mayor.

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Site for new Evanston stop on CTA's Yellow Line faces funding hurdle

April 16, 2012|By Jonathan Bullington, Chicago Tribune reporter

A recently released engineering and feasibility study of the proposed CTA Yellow Line station in Evanston officially recommends Asbury Avenue as the best site.

Evanston aldermen are scheduled to hear a report Monday night, April 16th on the next steps in constructing the station at Asbury, just north of Howard Street — still years away because funding has to be secured and detailed plans must be developed.

Dodge and Ridge avenues also were considered since officials began talking about a Yellow Line station in 2007. Several public meetings have been held to gather resident feedback on each proposed location.

A group of city officials, local residents and businesspeople conducted the study that selected Asbury Avenue as the best location.

Now the Illinois Department of Transportation will begin engineering design for the site and conduct a detailed analysis of construction costs and environmental impact, as well as get more input from the community. The first phase of the IDOT study could cost \$1 million to \$1.6 million, said Evanston senior traffic engineer Rajeev Dahal.

And although the end of the feasibility study marks a significant milestone, Ald. Ann Rainey, 8th, said further progress depends on the availability of funding.

"There is nothing that says, although I'm optimistic, that we will get funding," said Rainey, whose ward encompasses the Asbury site. "It's all up to the money w."

An Asbury station could cost about \$23 million to build and \$900,000 annually to operate, officials said.

In 2007, Evanston 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. Those areas had seen transit stations before 1964 and the inception of the Howard-to-Dempster service.

"No matter where a stop is put, it still makes no sense that this train goes through our town without stopping," Rainey said.

Long a straight shot from Howard Street to Dempster Street, the Skokie Swift might not be so swift if a Yellow Line station comes to Evanston.

Meanwhile, Skokie officials say the new \$20 million Yellow Line station at Oakton Street should open on April 30. The village recently agreed to spend \$478,000 building a parking lot for that station and \$51,320 on landscaping around the lot.

The Evanston 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.

With its close proximity to the Howard Street CTA station and South Boulevard Purple Line station, Ridge Avenue was the first station to fall out of favor with the committee.

When comparing Dodge and Asbury, officials found that the area around Dodge is less densely populated than Asbury. Another key factor against a Dodge station, officials said, is that the existing 85-year-old CTA bridge would need to be reconstructed to support a new station.

That work could add \$10 million to the cost, officials said. But Dodge did garner more support than Asbury in an online survey. Of the 426 respondents, 249 preferred Dodge to Asbury, with 51 respondents saying both locations were ideal.

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Details emerge on Cermak Road Green Line station

'Aggressive timeline' targeting open by end of 2014; will be paid for with \$50 million in TIF cash

03/23/2012 6:21 PM

By Ben Meyerson
Editor Chicago Journal

The Green Line's \$50 million new stop at Cermak Road should be open by the end of 2014, officials from the CTA and the city of Chicago said at a meeting Thursday night. And a stop at 18th Street is off the table for now, mostly due to issues with Orange Line trains.

Officials from the CTA discussed the station's details at a community meeting in Columbia College's 623 S.

Wabash Ave. building, explaining just why a stop at 18th isn't feasible right now.

The main problem is that a station at 18th would sit just next to the point in the CTA system where the Orange Line splits off to the southwest of the Green Line, according to the CTA's manager of planning, Joe Iacobucci. Putting a new stop in at 18th would require a completely new switching mechanism — including requiring an employee to run what's now an automatic switch.

"The new switch would have to be manned," Iacobucci said at the meeting. "It would cause additional complications with a system that runs pretty smoothly right now."

Additionally, since there used to be a Green Line station at Cermak, the CTA has the rights to enough land around the proposed site to build a new station without having to buy any land. At 18th, the CTA would have to buy property in order to build a new station — the right of way is at least 10 feet too narrow to build a station there now, Iacobucci said.

The city is aiming to accelerate the project, having it done by 2014. They're looking for contractors to design the station right now, and hope to have a design on the books by the end of the year.

The new station will be built with \$50 million taken entirely out of the Near South tax increment financing district, and it's no coincidence that the TIF is set to expire by the end of 2014.

The new stop will have three entrances, one on either side of Cermak and one further south at 23rd Street, which would be intended for conventioners and workers heading to McCormick Place and, hopefully, what would become the Motor Row entertainment district.

Benet Haller, director of planning and urban design with the city's Department of Housing and Economic Development, said the train stop would be key to Motor Row's growth.

"If you look at Uptown, or the area around Wrigleyville, those are entertainment districts, and a very important part of their success as an entertainment district is that they're directly next to an 'L' station," Haller said. "If you're out there drinking a lot, being able to get on the 'L' and head home and not drive or do something more dangerous is a positive benefit."

Wilmette to celebrate el train's 100th anniversary

The el arrived in Wilmette under cover of darkness on April Fool's Day, 1912. Later this month, the entire community is invited to help celebrate this 100th anniversary.

The free celebration is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. April 28 at Fourth Street and Linden Avenue.

Forrest Claypool, president of the Chicago Transit Authority, and Wilmette Village President Christopher S. Canning will start the celebration with brief comments, according to a news release from the Wilmette Historical Museum. Then guests will have the rare opportunity to tour two historic 1923 el cars. These "plushies" as they are called, have canvas-covered wooden roofs, luxurious interiors with green plush seats, circulating fans and opal shades on the lights. The leather "straphangers" overhead have porcelain enamel handholds.

In addition to the historic train, activities include the Dixieland Band of the Wilmette Community Band, information tables featuring historic photographs of the Linden Avenue station from the Wilmette Historical Museum's collection, and material from the el and participating Linden Square merchants.

A docent will field questions about the history of the 1913 el station, which is now a branch bank. Light refreshments will be provided by the North Shore Community Bank.

This celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Linden el is sponsored by the CTA, Wilmette Historical Museum, Wilmette/Kenilworth Chamber of Commerce, North Shore Community Bank and the village of Wilmette.

For more information, visit the museum's website, at wilmettehistory.org, or call the museum at (847) 853-7666.

When the el came to Wilmette, 100 years ago, it arrived in a way nobody in town had anticipated, according to the museum. In 1908 a North Side train line from downtown Chicago to Evanston was created, with plans to extend it to Wilmette a few years later. The proposed extension was opposed by Wilmette Village Board, who believed a cheap train from Chicago would bring in Sunday picnickers and other disreputable sorts of people.

In response, el service to Wilmette stole into town in the dead of night on April Fool's Day, 1912. After many months of unproductive wrangling with the village, el officials decided they were through with negotiations, according to the release. Without permission, workers extended the track and built a 40-foot platform and ticket-seller's booth while Wilmette residents slept.

Villagers awoke the next morning to find train cars at Fourth and Linden, ready to take them to Chicago.

Loop Track Renewal Work Begins

This Weekend

4/18/2012

Late night reroute on Friday; track closures Saturday through Monday morning

This weekend, crews will begin work associated with the Loop Track Renewal project and replace deteriorated rail bed and track components along the Wells and Van Buren elevated structure. Work will require a late night reroute of Orange and Pink line trains on Friday; and a track closure in both directions along Wells and Van Buren beginning Saturday morning through early morning Monday.

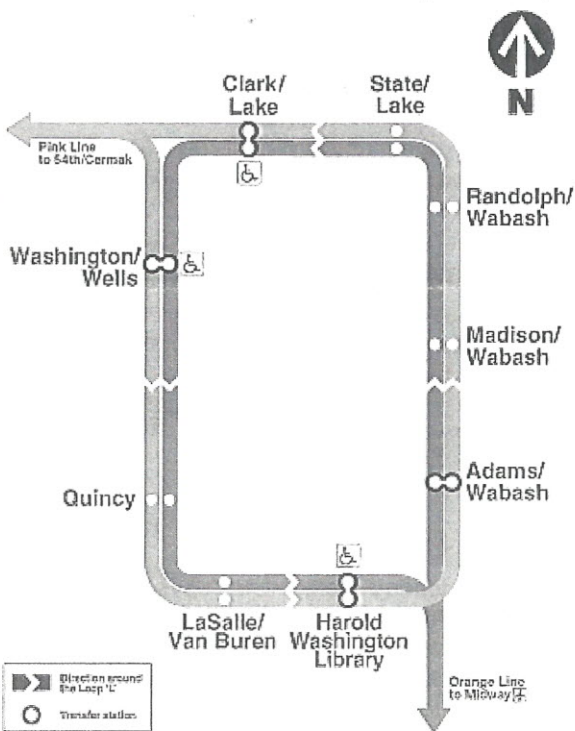
Friday Night Reroute: Affecting Orange and Pink Line Trains

From 9 p.m. Friday, April 20 until end of service (approximately 1:45 a.m. the following morning), Orange and Pink line trains will be rerouted from the inner Loop tracks to operate on the outer Loop tracks, and travel in a counterclockwise direction. During these times, Orange and Pink line customers will need to board and exit trains from the Brown Line (outer Loop track)

side of the platform. Upon entering the Loop: Orange Line trains will make their first stop at Adams/Wabash, then Madison/Wabash, Randolph/Wabash, State/Lake, Clark/Lake, Washington/Wells, Quincy, LaSalle/Van Buren and Harold Washington Library, then proceed to Roosevelt and resume the normal route.

Pink Line trains will make their first stop at Washington/Wells, then Quincy, LaSalle/Van Buren, Harold Washington Library, Adams/Wabash, Madison/Wabash, Randolph/Wabash, State/Lake and Clark/Lake, then proceed to Clinton and resume the normal route.

Pink Line trains will make their first stop at Washington/Wells, then Quincy, LaSalle/Van Buren, Harold Washington Library, Adams/Wabash, Madison/Wabash, Randolph/Wabash, State/Lake and Clark/Lake, then proceed to Clinton and resume the normal route.



Saturday Morning to Monday Morning: Wells/Van Buren Track Closure

From 4 a.m. Saturday, April 21 through 4 a.m.

Monday, April 23, the inner and outer elevated tracks along Wells and Van Buren streets will be closed. During this time, all trains serving the Loop elevated will operate along the Wabash and Lake sections of track.

Brown and Orange Line Trains

Brown and Orange line trains will operate as one route between Kimball and Midway in both directions along the Lake and Wabash elevated tracks in the Loop.

Southbound (to the Loop) Brown Line trains will operate on the inner Loop track as Orange Line trains from Merchandise Mart to Midway.

Northbound (to the Loop) Orange Line trains will operate on the outer Loop track as Brown Line trains from Roosevelt to Kimball.

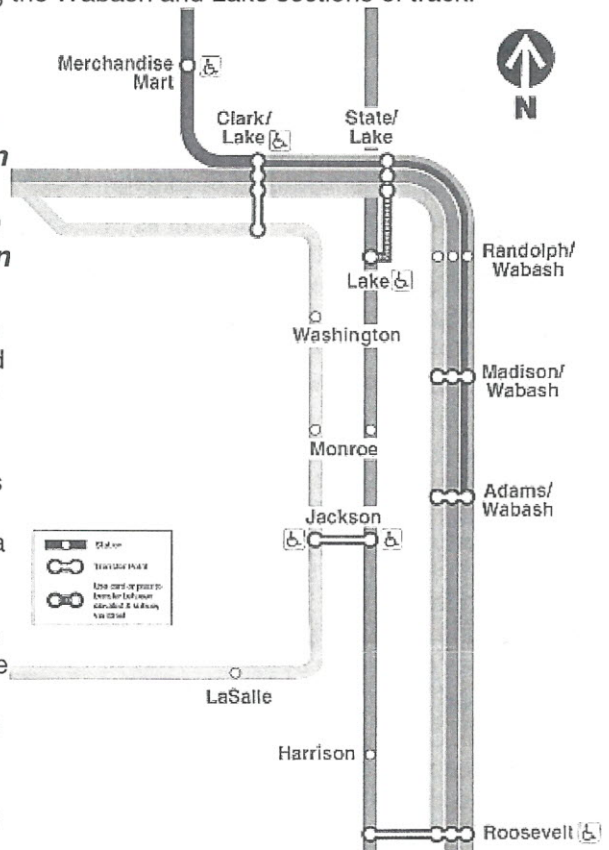
Pink Line Trains

Pink Line trains will operate between 54th/Cermak and Roosevelt. Eastbound (to the Loop) trains will travel on the inner Loop tracks and westbound (to 54th/Cermak) trains will operate on the outer Loop tracks.

Green Line Trains

Service along the Green Line will not be affected and trains will operate normally in both directions via Lake and Wabash.

All rail lines serving the Loop will resume normal operations at the start of service on Monday, April 23.



The Loop Track Renewal project will replace special track work at the Tower 18 and Tower 12 junctions, which are located at Lake/Wells and Wabash/Van Buren respectively, and nearly 11,500 feet of elevated rail and track components that are nearing the end of their useful life along: Wells and Van Buren streets; a small portion of elevated track along Wabash between Adams and Van Buren; and the Hubbard Curve, which is located just north of the Merchandise Mart station. Work is expected to be complete in late-2012.

CTA Welcomes First Starbucks to the 'L'

4/13/2012

The first-ever Starbucks on the 'L' will open its doors later this year at the North/Clybourn Red Line station. The addition of Starbucks further expands the variety of concessions already available to CTA customers and marks the largest national retailer to lease a CTA-owned space.

The space was an attractive location for the national chain as it is located adjacent to the Apple store at the North/Clybourn stop. "The high customer traffic on the Red Line in addition to foot traffic near the Apple store is an attractive opportunity for any concession retailer and we are pleased Starbucks will be our latest tenant," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "We continue to work toward leasing additional spaces to add even more customer amenities across the system."

A total of 32 bids were received for the 776-square-foot location at 1599 N. Clybourn Avenue. Starbucks submitted the highest bid per square foot for the 10-year lease, with options to extend the agreement after the initial term. Annual rent for the first five years is projected at \$75,000 per year with 10% increases at year six and at the beginning of the first and second year options. The third and fourth option terms will be determined by appraisal. The total 10-year base term lease is projected to generate \$787,500.

Chicago Transit Board approval of this lease brings the total number of leased spaces across the transit system to 89.

CTA Adjusts Parking Rates at Eight Park & Ride Locations

4/13/2012

The Chicago Transit Board today approved an ordinance to allow adjustments of parking rates at eight of its 14 CTA Park and Ride locations. These changes include increases as well as decreases in parking rates and are being implemented in an effort to increase parking occupancy, ridership and revenue.

The changes are in line with best practices in the parking industry, which call for regular price adjustments on a

location-by-location basis in order to reflect market dynamics.

The ordinance also allows for future adjustments of parking rates on an as-needed and lot-by-lot basis. Parking rates are subject to change once in any six-month period and the rate change for any individual lot in any given time increment will not exceed \$1

Rate changes will be posted and take effect at the following lots beginning May 1, 2012.

Park & Ride Daily Rate Changes: Increases

Halsted & Archer	\$5.00 per weekday (\$1.00 increase)\$5.00 per weekend day (\$1.00 increase)
35 th & Archer	\$5.00 per weekday (\$1.00 increase)
51 st & Pulaski	\$5.00 per weekday (\$1.00 increase)
Kimball & Lawrence	\$5.00 per weekday (\$1.00 increase)

Park & Ride Daily Rate Changes: Decreases

Garfield	\$2.00 per day (\$2.00 decrease)
Ashland & 63 rd	\$2.00 per day (\$2.00 decrease)
54 th & Cermak	\$2.00 per day (\$2.00 decrease)
48 th & Kedzie	\$2.00 per day (\$2.00 decrease)

CTA Seeks Sponsors for Holiday Train and Other Assets

3/16/2012

The Chicago Transit Authority today, through its partner, IMG, issued Requests for Proposals for the naming rights to the CTA Holiday Train, New Year's Eve Penny Rides, Free Rides for Chicago Public Schools students on the first day of school, and CTA Bus Tracker and Train Tracker.

Private companies now have this unique opportunity to associate their name with well-established, iconic CTA services. In addition to naming rights, this partnership will also include branding, advertising, communication and promotion, online promotion and links, and an on-site event announcing the participation of the selected bidder.

"These CTA assets have significant value and offer unique advertising space for businesses looking to reach riders in Chicago and the 40 suburbs where the CTA provides service," said CTA President Forrest Claypool.

This initiative will allow CTA to increase revenues and make it possible for CTA to continue operating popular services such as the Holiday Train, Penny Rides, and free rides on the first day of school.

"These annual traditions are something riders anticipate and sponsorship ensures their viability while providing prime exposure for sponsors who are guaranteed to reach thousands of CTA customers as well as residents and passersby," Claypool said.

Sponsorship contracts for the Holiday Train, Penny Rides, and first day of school are for three years and CTA Bus and Train Tracker contracts are for one year. All RFP responses will be sent to IMG, selected by CTA in August 2011 to identify marketable CTA assets, determine their value and develop the requests for proposals to solicit sponsorships.

IMG is also in the process of identifying additional sponsorship opportunities for other CTA properties and assets. Under CTA's contract, IMG will only be compensated if sponsorships are secured and approved by the Chicago Transit Board. Compensation is based strictly on commission and on a graduated percentage scale based on the value of the transaction.

Bus depot on hold, but changes still coming at Metra station

By Hank Beckman for The Sun April 20, 2012

The area around Naperville's Metra Station on Fourth Avenue will be getting some improvements soon, but the concept of putting a bus depot at the Parkview Parking Lot is off the table for now.

"A bus depot on the south side just doesn't make sense to me," Councilman Grant Wehrli said before he joined Mayor George Pradel, Steve Chirico and Doug Krause last week in voting against accepting the technical report from city staff that included the bus depot for future consideration.

But their colleagues disagreed and voted to accept the report designating the Parkview Lot as a feasible spot sometime in the future for a depot that would accommodate 12 buses.

A 7 to 2 majority — with Wehrli and Pradel dissenting — also voted to receive a technical report on improvements on the north and south side of the tracks and making North Avenue, currently one way going west only, a two-way street between Ellsworth and Washington streets.

The improvements north of the tracks include modifications to the East Burlington Lot including a bus-only lane and concrete medians to keep separate buses, taxis and "kiss-and-ride" commuters. The south side will also get medians installed to create bus lanes, with some daily fee parking spots relocated to either side of Burlington Square Park.

Making North Avenue two-way will reduce traffic in the residential areas surrounding the station, city staff said.

Councilman Joe McElroy asked why a bus depot wouldn't be put on the north side of the tracks.

Project Manager Rory Fancier said that of the 12 bus routes that served the tracks, 11 operated primarily on

the south side, making the south side more conducive for a depot.

The idea of a south side depot has drawn concerns from neighborhood residents and property owners.

John McCarthy owns property on Central Avenue and said a depot would hurt property values. He also noted that a restaurant with outdoor seating was planned nearby and diners and renters in the area wouldn't appreciate the diesel fumes from idling buses at a depot.

"I'm worried that you're going to revisit this again," McCarthy told the City Council.

Doug Krause echoed McCarthy's sentiments, pointing out that the report made the depot a permanent part of Naperville's planning, comparing it to the planned 87th Street Bridge that has remained in the city's Capital Improvement Plan since the 1980s.

Although the 130 parking permit holders currently using the Parkview Lot can rest easy for the time being, the improvements to the station will still eliminate 51 spots around the depot, seven daily fee spots and 44 permit spots.

Council members also wanted to know if staff had taken into consideration the handicapped spaces that would be lost, both in the approved modifications and if the Parkview Lot was eliminated in the future.

Transportation Team Leader Karyn Robles said that the city "would then re-evaluate where the spaces should be."

Sensitive to the long wait commuters endured for permit parking spaces, the potential loss of them clearly bothered City Council members.

But Fancier said that the any reduction in permit parking could be handled through attrition.

"We'll look at scaling back the number of new permits issued," Fancier said. "We will not be taking permits away from any commuters."

While Transportation, Engineering and Development Director Marcie Schatz said it was acceptable to vote separately on the immediate improvements and a future Parkview Bus Depot, she noted that with increased use of the station, at some point "serious changes" would have to be made in the way people use transportation to avoid congestion problems.

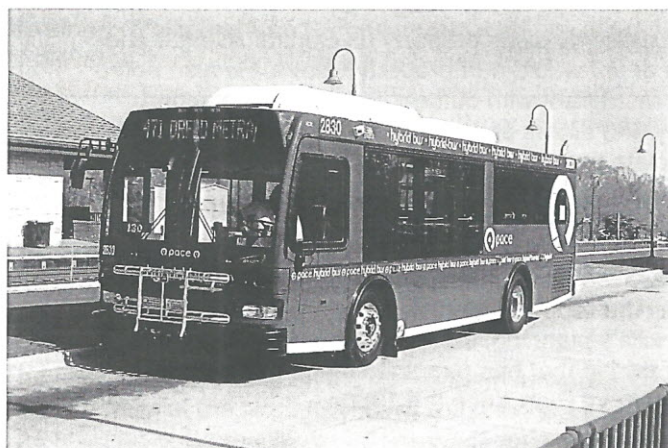
Pace trying out 2 hybrid buses

Agency hopes diesel-electric test will lead to more fuel-efficient vehicles

April 11, 2012|By Richard Wronski, Chicago Tribune reporter

Two new diesel-electric hybrid buses designed to reduce emissions and improve fuel economy are now operating on Pace routes in the Highland Park area, the suburban bus agency said Tuesday.

Although Pace has used hybrid paratransit vans in the west and northwest suburbs, this is the agency's first experiment with 30-foot hybrid buses. The CTA has had several dozen diesel-electric buses since 2009.



Officials said they hope the buses will pave the way for more "green technology" vehicles, including those fueled by compressed natural gas.

"We're always looking at ways to reduce our carbon footprint," Pace Chairman Rick Kwasneski said. "If these (buses) work well, we'll bring more of them into our system."

The two buses were ordered in late 2010 at a cost of roughly \$525,000 each from Orion Bus Industries Inc. The hybrids, manufactured by Orion in Mississauga, Ontario, and Oriskany, N.Y., feature a green paint scheme with white accents, differentiating them from Pace's familiar blue and white buses.

The hybrids cost more than diesel-only buses, which run about \$288,000. But because the manufacturer estimates the hybrids are 25 percent more fuel-efficient, Pace hopes the new vehicles will be more cost-effective over their normal 12-year life span, Kwasneski said.

The buses are powered by a drive system that switches between an electric motor and a diesel engine to conserve fuel and reduce exhaust emissions, Pace said.

The emission-control system also uses a special filter to trap soot and other matter in the diesel exhaust, Pace said.

The new buses will operate on two routes.

Route 471 operates weekdays and Saturdays between Highland Park and Deerfield, providing service to Metra's Union Pacific North Highland Park Station, the Milwaukee District North Deerfield Station and Deerbrook Shopping Center.

Route 472 operates weekdays and Saturdays between downtown Highland Park and Fort Sheridan, including the Highland Park Metra Station, Highland Park High School, Highland Park Hospital and Highwood.

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Chicago Street may open up

By Bob Okon bokon@stmedianetwork.com April 16, 2012

JOLIET — Plans for a new transit center could mean opening up Chicago Street, the city's main street downtown that has been cut into two sections for decades by the county court complex.

Joliet officials for years have talked about a desire to open up Chicago Street, but the job never has been done. Now, Pace buses may force the issue.

"Before it was in a future plan," James Haller, the city's director of community and economic development, said. Haller told the Joliet City Council at its Monday meeting that Pace wants Chicago Street opened up as part of the new layout for public transportation that will be created when the transit center is built.

Pace wants Chicago Street opened up, Haller said, because the transit center will include a central bus boarding area south of the courthouse, which would block the buses from downtown. The central boarding area now is on the north side of the courthouse where Chicago Street is blocked off. Opening up Chicago Street will give Pace buses quicker access downtown and beyond.

Just when that might happen is not clear. City and county officials are negotiating for the property. Chicago Street would run through what is now a county parking lot, and the city would have to provide parking options.

"It's always been a dream of the city to open up Chicago Street to have a gateway downtown from Interstate 80," said Councilman John Gerl, who added it has been a topic of discussion going back to the 1990s. "I know the county is receptive to it. But it will cut right through their parking lot and they'll need some accommodation."

Gerl said the opening of Chicago Streets "seems to be getting some traction" with the downtown transit project.

The possibility signals one of the ways the \$42 million project may change downtown Joliet along with ways people get access to public transportation.

The transit facility is called a Multimodal Transportation Center because it's being designed to put assorted forms of transportation — trains, buses, taxi cabs and even bicycles — in one place.

The city also has been buying property in the vicinity to create more parking spaces. A private developer has proposed building a parking deck next to the transit center that could serve both commuters and Silver Cross Field for Slammers games. And the city plans to convert the old Union Station to other uses once a new train depot is opened nearby.

City Manager Thomas Thanas said the project is a complex one because of the many involved interests. A planning meeting on the project this week will bring about 50 people, he said.

One of the first buildings to go up will be what is being called a "bus portal," which will be the boarding area for Pace. Thanas said that should be done in 2013.

Thanas said he was reluctant to give target dates because of the complexity of the project, which includes realignments of railroad tracks.

"We are working very hard to make sure we have critical construction in 2013," he said.

RTA wants update on efforts to cut CTA budget deficit

BY TINA SFONDELES Transportation Reporter
tsfondeles@suntimes.com April 17, 2012 5:21PM

The executive director of the RTA wants some answers from the CTA about the status of its budget-balancing efforts this year.

And it's hoping to get word of any possible CTA fare increases or service cuts by April 30.

A letter dated Monday, RTA chief Joseph Costello seeks a meeting with CTA President Forrest Claypool to talk about the transit agency's ongoing labor negotiations and its plan for an alternative budget should either labor negotiations remain unresolved or not end up with cost savings.

The CTA board approved a \$1.24 billion budget in November that included a \$277 million deficit. The agency said management initiatives would help reduce the deficit by \$117 million and the proposed budget would close the remaining gap with work rule changes, health care reform and restraint in wage growth.

A revised budget is due July 1. But required public hearings on service cuts or fare increase would have to begin by May, Costello's letter said.

Claypool last year said the CTA would work with labor partners to "preserve jobs and avoid potential fare hikes and service cuts that will directly impact our riders."

RTA board member William Coulson Tuesday said the letter simply seeks a status update on a "moving target" — the CTA's efforts to cut labor costs.

"If they can achieve savings, the budget can stand as it is and if they can't, they're going to have to make some changes," Coulson said.

"We have good relations with Forrest Claypool, and we don't anticipate a problem with this," Coulson said. "We just want to know what the status is."

In response, the CTA said negotiations are still underway but the agency is "confident" there will be a new labor agreement this year.

"We are still negotiating with our labor partners while we continue to have a tight rein on our finances with an eye toward conserving operating dollars," spokeswoman Molly Sullivan said.

The letter will be discussed at Wednesday's RTA board meeting. Claypool had not received the letter as of Tuesday afternoon.

Rockford Mass Transit seeking to purchase CNG commuter buses

Brian Leaf Rockford Register Star April 15, 2012

Local transit officials are seeking a \$1.8 million federal grant to buy natural gas-fueled commuter buses to run from Rockford and Belvidere to Metra trains in Elgin.

The Rockford Mass Transit District wants to establish rapid transit, where buses would use special tollway lanes between the region and suburban train connections into Chicago.

The district has applied for the money through the Federal Transit Administration's Clean Fuels Grant program, which will award \$51.5 million this fiscal year for transit bus projects.

The RMTD grant would buy three buses that run on cleaner-burning compressed natural gas, which cost about \$2 a gallon last week in Rockford; diesel averaged more than \$4 a gallon in Rockford.

"This service will foster environmental responsibility by promoting the use of public transit and reducing congestion on I-90," RMTD said in its grant application.

Filling the Fueling stations need

The application comes as Trillium CNG, a private developer, looks for sites in Rockford for compressed natural-gas fueling stations. Garbage hauler Rock River Environmental Services and the Winnebago County Highway Department are both looking at natural gas-powered vehicles for their fleets.

"Usually, lack of refueling infrastructure is cited as a hurdle to CNG adoption," Trillium President Mark A. Radtke said in a letter supporting the grant. "In this case, Trillium CNG is providing a CNG fueling station in Rockford at no cost or risk to the agency."

Transportation planners have been trying for years to secure transit service for commuters from Boone and Winnebago counties to the Chicago area. They wanted an Amtrak line from Chicago to Dubuque, Iowa, to run through Belvidere and Rockford, one that would eventually add enough regular service to be used as commuter rail.

But when Gov. Pat Quinn picked a southern route through Genoa instead of Belvidere, transit backers began looking at alternatives that could be stepping stones to commuter rail.

The Bus Rapid Transit Policy Center in Washington says bus rapid transit "combines many of the features people like about rail systems with the flexibility and cost savings of using over-the-road vehicles."

Planning minus the funding

But getting the buses is just a first step.

Steve Ernst, executive director of the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for planning, said competitive grants are always long shots. But with the rebuilding of Interstate 90 by the Illinois Toll Highway Authority, there could be transit opportunities even if the bus money doesn't come through as the tollway explores the addition of "managed" lanes. These lanes would be reserved for transit services and drivers willing to pay a premium in exchange for reliable travel times in uncongested lanes

Pondering near-term options

If RMTD gets the buses, the next stop is finding money to start the rapid transit program.

If it doesn't get the money, subsidized van pools where people working in the same company or area ride to and from their employers in a shared vehicle, may be near-term options.

Downers Grove shuttle now fully funded by Pace

Staff reports Downers Grove Reporter March 27, 2012

Downers Grove officials announced the Grove Commuter Shuttle bus system is now fully funded by Pace and fare box revenues.

No village funds are needed, making the system financially sustainable, in line with the recommendations within the Long Range Financial Plan.

Since Fiscal Year 2000, the village has received grant funds from Pace to support the operation of the Grove Commuter Shuttle bus system. Beginning in 2010, staff had a series of meetings with Pace officials in an effort to restructure the form of the agreement and to substantially increase Pace's contribution to this transit operation.

In 2011, Pace's Board of Directors agreed to amend the 2012 operating agreement to include payment of all operating and maintenance expenses.

RMTD Sets Date For East Side Facility Grand Opening

The Rockford Mass Transit District is pleased to announce that the Grand Opening of the new East Side Transit Center is scheduled for Tuesday, May 22, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. A ribbon cutting featuring comments by Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Ann Schneider and Mayor Larry Morrissey will take place at 10:00 a.m. followed by tours of the facility and refreshments. The ribbon cutting is open to the public and is one of several activities scheduled during the

week of May 20th to celebrate the completion of the facility.

Located at 725 N. Lyford Road, across from the Cracker Barrel Restaurant, the RMTD East Side Transfer Center was designed by the Larson and Darby Group of Rockford, IL. The building features 8 bus berths, a passenger waiting area for over 90 passengers, a vending room with cafe seating, a state of the art digital information board system, energy efficient HVAC and lighting systems and a community room with seating capacity for 50. Highlighting the lobby area is a 15' by 15' terrazzo compass designed by Larson and Darby and constructed by Northern Illinois Terrazzo and Tile Company of Rockford, IL. Rockford Structures Construction Company of Machesney Park, IL, served as the General Contractor and ARC Design Resources Inc., of Loves Park, IL served as the Civil Engineer. Jim Johnson of Rockford Mass Transit served as Project Manager. Built to enhance the look of the surrounding area, the East Side Transit Center is constructed out of natural stone, brick and glass. The grounds of the facility have been professionally landscaped by Thomas Graceffa & Associates Inc of Rockford, IL. Interior furnishings and design were provided by Widner Interiors of Rockford, IL.

The transfer center cost \$6,180,000 to build. An additional \$1.4 million was used for the land acquisition and Architectural and Engineering services. Over 97% of the dollars used to construct this building were federal dollars with the State of Illinois contributing just less than 3% of the funding. RMTD was able to proceed with the construction of this building largely due to the \$3,693,756.00 contributed through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). As of this writing, Rockford Mass Transit can lay claim to being the first ARRA transit project completed in the State of Illinois. The 725 N. Lyford Road station will serve as a transit hub for RMTD routes and Trailways motorcoach service. Immediate RMTD service will connect passengers using the East Side Street route to the newly started service in Belvidere. Passengers originating in Belvidere will have seamless connections to Rockford destinations on East State Street and the rest of the RMTD system. Later this fall RMTD anticipates additional service thru this facility connecting routes to the north and up to the Stateline area. By year end, it will be finally be possible for a transit rider to travel on public transportation from Rockford or Belvidere all the way p to Janesville, WI. This has long been a vision for Rockford Mass Transit officials and one that will be realized very shortly. Strategically located close to I-90, the East Side facility also positions RMTD to be a key player in future bus rapid transit service into Chicago and the nearby suburbs.

The new facility will also serve as a ticketing and dispatch location for Trailways motorcoach bus service. Trailways provides twice daily service out of Rockford; at 8:15 a.m. and at 6:00 p.m. Trailways customers will now

have access to the building to purchase tickets and wait for the coaches any time the Lyford Road facility is open.

For the long haul: Classic Bus Lines puts three new 2012 MCI® J4500s into service

SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 9, 2012 — When Classic Bus Lines looks for a new coach, it looks for one thing above all others: longevity. The Coral Springs, Florida, company recently took delivery of three 2012 MCI J4500 models, replacing three older coaches, and it expects them to go the distance.



"Every new bus looks great and smells good, but look down the road and see what's 15 years old and still on highway," says Robert LaPointe, who owns the company with his wife, Joyce. "I guarantee you; four out of five will be MCIs."

The new coaches join the all-MCI Classic Bus Lines Fleet, which is made up of five J4500s and two E4500s. The recently delivered J4500s offer all of the model's signature styling, safety and performance features, including clean-diesel technology, wide-ride suspension and electronic stability control. The LaPointes also opted for 110-volt outlets for customer electronics and installed their own Wi-Fi and GPS tracking system with drive cams. The coaches have so far been out on local trips around Miami and Orlando, and already, they're popular with passengers. "They love them," says LaPointe. "They are beautiful buses."

While Classic Coach Lines appreciates a coach that can last decades, it runs newer coaches — generally no older than about five years — to meet the demands of the market. All vehicles in the fleet have been purchased since 2002, when the business was re-formed after being bought by CoachUSA in 1997. The LaPointe family started the original Classic Bus Lines in 1980 with two used GMC buses; its first new coach was an MCI, and the company has bought MCIs ever since.

LaPointe says starting the business anew in 2002 was relatively easy. "It was very simple. We had a good reputation, and we still had the building." They also had the family. Three generations currently work the

business, and LaPointe jokes that the fourth generation, currently in its infancy, will soon be answering phones.

In addition to providing charter service to the South Florida area and across the U.S. and Canada, Classic Bus Lines operates a full-service garage. Its website, which features a "name your own price" option as well as a detailed rate sheet, is www.classicbuslines.net.

Bigger in Texas: Regent Coach Line adds six new MCI® J4500s

SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 22, 2012 — If one is good, six should be better. That was the thinking behind Regent Coach Line's recent purchase of six new MCI J4500 coaches.



"We bought our other J4500 in 2009, and you wouldn't know it was there, with regards to maintenance," said Geoff Dupree, general manager of the San Antonio, Texas, business. "We figured, if this one was this good, let's get six more. We've had good luck with MCIs."

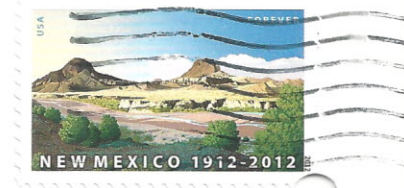
The new coaches, which replace six others in the company's 21-coach fleet, sport Wi-Fi and 110-volt outlets in addition to standard features that include electronic stability control, wide-ride suspension with Koni FSD shocks.

"Wi-Fi is a necessity if you're doing any work with colleges these days," says Dupree. In addition to work with educational and college sport clients, which include the University of Texas, Texas State and Texas A&M University, Regent serves conventions, churches and other charter customers in the growing San Antonio area.

The new J4500s also feature 2010-EPA-standard Cummins ISX engines and Allison transmissions, which have, in many cases, delivered better fuel efficiency than previous configurations, along with near-zero emissions. "Fuel mileage was an issue in the coaches we replaced," said Dupree. "We're just starting to do the numbers, but what we've noticed so far is that the new coaches are significantly better than where we were."

Geoff Dupree's father, Richard, started Regent Coach Line in 1999 with partners Russ Tottle and Glenn

Omnibus Society of America
PO Box A3051
Chicago IL 60690



Robinson; all three came to their new company with considerable industry experience. Geoff's sister, Nicole Wilson, is also involved in managing the business.

For more information, go to www.regentcoachline.com.

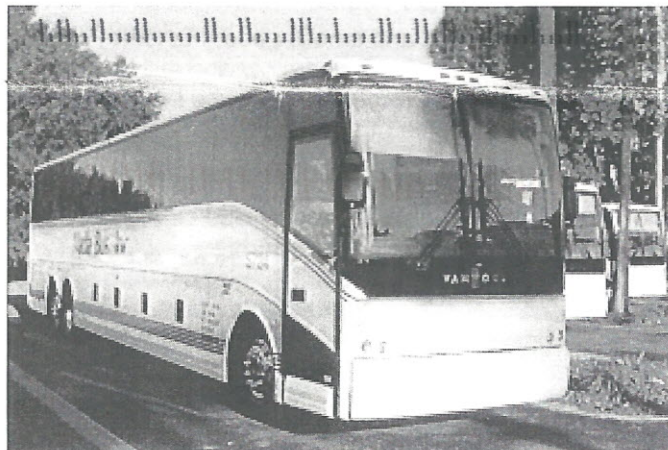
Five 2012 Van Hool C2045's Purchased by Nada Bus in California.

"We want to offer our customers the best possible experience while they're visiting the United States," said Kats Saito, Manager of Commerce, CA, based Nada Bus. "The five new 2012 Van Hool C2045 coaches we just purchased (and the two on order for April) represent one part of that commitment. We operate 15 coaches and keeping the fleet fresh not only serves our passengers, but makes us an efficient, 'green' company."

Founded in 1980 by Hiroshi Nada to offer inbound Japanese tourists quality service tailored to their needs, Nada Bus continues to thrive, despite a sagging economy.

In addition to their original mission, Nada (www.nadabus.com) offers charter service, and operates weekend scheduled service to casinos. Mr. Saito remarked, "If we provide our clients with the best possible service and the most modern coaches, we'll continue to do well, regardless of economic conditions. Our passengers love the Van Hool's comfortable cabin and great air conditioning. Our mechanics and drivers

feel they're the most reliable coaches available, and ABC takes great care of us on the support side."



The 57 passenger coaches are all equipped with Detroit DD13 engines and Allison transmissions. They have Alcoa Durabrite aluminum wheels, REI multi-monitor DVD systems, Hi-Fi Audio and CD Players, full fabric interiors, wireless microphones and reclining Amaya Torino seats with footrests, as well as Van Hool's unique rear passenger window.

"Mr. Nada and all the people at Nada Bus are a joy to work with. They treat ABC like friends and that makes it fun for us to help them with their motor coach needs," pointed out ABC Senior Account Executive, Charlie Walser. "Nada's willingness to invest, even when the economy is tough, is one expression of how serious they are about doing things right."