



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

MAY-JUNE 2013

RUN 03-2013

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 "osabus.org". At **osabus.org** we will be posting upcoming fan trips and meetings information, as well as membership information.

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

• MAY/JUNE MEETINGS

The May meeting of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on May 3, 2013, 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 7, 2013, at PACE West Division 3500 W. Lake Street, Melrose Park. The meeting will start at 7:00 pm.

Chicago Transit Board Sets Policies for Ventra Fare Products

3/13/2013

CTA prepares for summer 2013 launch of modern new fare-payment system

The Chicago Transit Board today approved the next step in moving passengers toward the nation's first open fare transit system, one that provides customers more flexible and convenient options to pay fares.

The new open fare system, set to launch in summer 2013, will replace the current payment system of magnetic stripe cards and Chicago Card/Chicago Card Plus. The new system, called Ventra, will allow riders to use Ventra cards or their personal contactless credit and debit cards to board trains and buses. CTA's fare structure will remain unchanged.

Transit riders transitioning to the new Ventra card will incur no additional costs, provided they take a minute to call and register the card, or do the same online or in person at CTA's sales office at 567 W. Lake St. Fares will remain \$2 on bus and \$2.25 on rail when paid for with Ventra cards or by personal contactless debit and credit cards.

Customers can load cash on their Ventra cards and still pay the regular bus and rail fares with no additional fees.

Registration of the Ventra card prompts an immediate transfer of the \$5 one-time card purchase price back to the card as stored value for the purchase of bus or rail trips. Additional value can be loaded on the card with cash or credit cards at rail stations or at more than 2,000 retail locations.

For transit users purchasing a disposable, single-ride ticket with cash, the board adopted the following:

Limited Use Media Fee. A 50-cent limited use fee will be assessed to single rail ride tickets that include the cost of a single rail ride and two transfers. The fee covers the cost to produce these disposable cards embedded with a wireless chip. The single-ride ticket is designed primarily for infrequent riders or tourists. Any CTA rider can avoid the fee by using a Ventra card or their personal credit/debit card equipped with a contactless chip. Once a customer has a Ventra reloadable card, there are no additional single-ride fees. Cash fares on buses will remain at \$2.25.

In addition, the board approved:

Dormancy Fee on Transit Account. For reloadable cards not used in 18 months or more, accounts will be deducted \$5 monthly, a common practice in the prepaid card industry.

One use of the card within 18 months avoids the fee, and customers will receive a notice about inactivity. This policy is more liberal than the current CTA policy for magnetic-stripe cards, which will expire and lose all of their stored value after 15 months.

Reloadable Card Purchase Price Refund. A one-time refundable \$5 fee to obtain a new reloadable card will be converted to stored fare value by simply registering the card within 90 days. In just a few minutes, customers can register the card online at ventrachicago.com, over the phone, or in person at the CTA service desk, 567 W. Lake St.

CTA customers by January 2014 will be able to purchase Ventra reloadable cards at more than 2,000 locations within 1/3 mile of more than 11,000 CTA bus stops and at all rail stations; currently, CTA customers can buy fare cards at more than 600 locations.

CTA Transfers Two Buses to City Colleges of Chicago

3/13/2013

Vehicle will help students prepare for new careers

The Chicago Transit Board today approved an intergovernmental agreement with City Colleges of Chicago for the transfer of two CTA buses to be used at Olive Harvey College for new transportation-related courses offered by its "College to Careers" initiative.

Transportation Delivery and Logistics classes will be offered to students interested in entering the transportation field. As part of the curriculum students will be able to obtain a Commercial Driver's License ("CDL-B"), using the CTA buses during their instruction. A lack of a commercial vehicle is often a barrier for those who need one when trying to obtain a CDL with the Secretary of State. The program also eliminates an often costly barrier for those looking to enroll in private CDL courses.

"The CTA is pleased to partner with City Colleges of Chicago and support their new training program," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "CTA is continuing to hire part-time bus operators and a program such as this will offer hands-on training to students interested in employment at the CTA and elsewhere."

The agreement allows for the transfer of ownership of two Nova buses to Olive Harvey College at the cost of \$1 per bus. The buses are fully depreciated and will be sold "as is" and stripped of all CTA logos, markings and fareboxes. The CTA will not be held responsible for any maintenance of the buses after they are transferred.

Enrolled students will have the added value of hands-on learning and practice of driving a passenger bus throughout the length of the course. In addition students will use the buses for testing in order to obtain their commercial license. Students will have the vehicles available to them for testing.

As part of the new agreement with City Colleges of Chicago, CTA is committed to interviewing those who successfully complete the six-week course of the College to Careers Initiative.

CTA Attracts New Concessions

3/13/2013

New cafes, eateries to open on Blue and Brown Lines

The Chicago Transit Board today approved four leases with three vendors, continuing CTA's trend of adding and expanding its concessions offerings available to CTA rail customers.

The Board approved leases for two Café Transit locations at the California and Damen Blue Line stops, The Bageler and His Wife at the Belmont Blue Line stop, and a Dunkin' Donuts franchise at the Kimball Brown Line.

"CTA is pleased to continue to offer more convenient concession choices for our customers while supporting local businesses, with more than half of our concessions

spaces being operated by small business owners," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "Continuing to provide our customers with convenient, attractive places to grab a quick coffee or bite to eat is part of our strategy to continue to improve the customer experience."

Café Transit is the latest venture of the owners of Caffé Streets, a boutique coffee shop in Wicker Park. Owners Brent Norseman, Kevin Heisner and Darko Arandjelovic were looking for additional opportunities in Wicker Park and pursued the CTA. "We are dedicated to community-driven opportunities," said Arandjelovic. "We love the energy on the 'L' and wanted to celebrate it by offering boutique-quality coffee and food to the CTA and its customers."

Blue Line riders can also taste the offerings of The Bageler and His Wife, at the Belmont Station. Fresh bagels, croissants, teas and espresso from a local roaster will be available this spring. The couple pursued the CTA for their first retail store in order to appeal to early risers as well as evening commuters who might be interested in purchasing baked goods for dinner without having to make an extra trip to the market.

Customers at the Kimball Brown Line station will also see the addition of a Dunkin' Donuts which is also a locally owned corporate franchise.

All three Blue Line leases are 10 years in length through 2023; the Kimball location is a 15-year term ending 2028. The total revenue to the CTA through the initial term of all four leases is \$825,000.

Since May 2011, CTA has lowered vacancy rates by 14 percent and has added \$7.1 million in new concessions leases.

Chicago Transit Authority Renews, Expands Popular U-Pass Program

3/13/2013

Student fares offered at deeply discounted rate and with added convenience

The Chicago Transit Board today voted on new contract terms for its University Pass (U-Pass) Program. The new contract with colleges and universities extends the program an additional five years, expands the participation of post-secondary schools and adjusts the U-Pass fare while still offering low-cost transportation for students. In addition, students for the first time will be able to use their U-Pass on Pace buses this fall.

U-Pass provides more than 35 million rides annually for students at 52 participating colleges and universities. This fall, the program will be expanded to post-secondary, certificate-granting schools. Currently U-Pass has only been available to schools that award academic degrees.

"The CTA is committed to making sure students have affordable access to public transportation during their academic enrollment," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "The U-Pass is one of CTA's most heavily

discounted passes, and now more students will be able to benefit from this popular CTA program."

This fall the daily, unlimited ride fares for U-Pass users will increase by 26 cents to \$1.07, consistent with past U-Pass price increases. The change, which works out to \$15 a semester, offsets the higher operational expenses for the CTA, while offering a rate that is less than half of what a full-fare, single ride costs but with unlimited daily use during the school year. On a monthly basis, students will save a minimum of \$66 per month over that full-fare price.

Academic institutions that want to participate in the U-Pass program must enter into a contract with the CTA. Participating schools pay 70 percent of the per-student, per-day price upfront by semester to the CTA.

"Public Transportation has been vital to graduate students annually at Northwestern since 2007," said Penny Warren, Assistant Dean of Student Life & Multicultural Affairs at Northwestern University's Graduate School. "Our students are still being offered a bargain price for unlimited daily use on the CTA."

As CTA transitions to its new Ventra fare payment system this summer, U-Pass program participants this fall will be issued Ventra cards that will replace current U-Pass fare media.

The transit cards will have each student's name and photo, and will be available for the fall 2013 semester. The new card will be more durable and the only card students will need for transit at all times, even when school is out of session. Full fares will be deducted from the reloadable funds feature on the card when school is out of session.

Students will have the additional benefit of now being able to use their U-Pass on Pace. As a Ventra partner, Pace buses will accept the new U-Pass card and deduct regular Pace fares also beginning this fall.

The new contract is in place through the end of the summer term in 2018 for each participating school. The U-Pass program was created in 2000, when the Chicago Transit Board created the official program after a two-year pilot.

CTA Begins Plan to Upgrade Red, Blue Line Subway Cellular Service

4/3/2013

Agency will issue Request for Information (RFI) to launch process to modernize network; benefits include continuous, reliable wireless service between downtown and O'Hare

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) plans to upgrade the wireless communication network in its subways and underground facilities to increase the speed and reliability of its network, with the goal of ensuring that customers of all major wireless carriers will have continuous mobile phone service underground in all CTA subway tunnels.

As a first step, the CTA today issued a Request for Information (RFI) bid to solicit responses from wireless telecommunication companies to determine the feasibility of designing, financing, installing, operating and maintaining a modern cellular infrastructure system in the 11.4 miles of CTA's Red and Blue line tunnels and underground facilities.

"To be a world-class city, Chicago must have a world-class infrastructure, so that people can get around the city efficiently, safely, and productively," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "CTA is investing in all aspects of its infrastructure, from rails to stations to wireless access and as the quality of the service continues to improve, I am confident more and more passengers will use the system to get to work and school and enjoy their lives."

"CTA is committed to making critical technology investments on our transit system," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "By taking steps to begin the process of modernizing our wireless capabilities, we are better serving our customers, including customers traveling between downtown and O'Hare International Airport as well as providing more reliable service for CTA personnel and emergency responders."

The four-week RFI bid is intended to gather information through an interactive and collaborative process with interested parties, which will help CTA determine the estimated project budget, requirements and timeline for implementation. This information will form the basis of the official Request for Proposals (RFP), which will be issued at a later date. CTA will ultimately seek a neutral-host partner that can serve all wireless carriers. The goal of both the RFI and the RFP will be to find a partner that can provide CTA customers with uninterrupted wireless service.

Under the proposed project, CTA would ultimately own the new network; however, respondents would be solely responsible for funding their proposed projects. In addition to building and operating a vendor neutral-host network – which will allow any wireless service provider to operate on the system – the selected vendor will also be responsible for managing and negotiating third-party license agreements with major wireless service providers. Fees generated from the third-party licenses would be split with the managing vendor and CTA.

The CTA currently owns and leases its subway cellular network to six major wireless service providers, which generates approximately \$1.8 million in non-farebox revenue for the agency annually.

CTA Upgrades Green Line with \$20 Million of Station, Track Improvements

4/5/2013

Improvements will prepare Green Line for increased traffic during Red Line South Reconstruction Project; benefit Green Line riders for years to come

The Chicago Transit Authority is investing nearly \$20 million in railroad track and station improvements to the southern Green Line. The projects will prepare the Green Line to handle an increase in passengers related to the five-month reconstruction of the Red Line South beginning in May, and will benefit Green Line customers for the long term with increased service reliability and fewer delays.

Improvements that have been made or will be completed by May include improvements and temporary expansion of two Green Line stations, Garfield and Ashland/63rd, and significant track and signal work beginning south of Roosevelt at several locations along the Green Line that will eliminate emerging slow zones that could impact and reduce travel times.

The improvements will enable Green Line tracks and stations to accommodate additional trains during the Red Line South reconstruction—a \$425 million initiative that will completely rebuild the Red Line between Cermak/Chinatown and 95th Street over a five-month period beginning May 19. Because the Red Line South project will require a five-month shutdown of that section of the Red Line, Red Line trains will run on elevated Green Line tracks between Ashland/63rd and Roosevelt. CTA will provide free shuttle buses that will transport customers from four Red Line stations south of 63rd Street to Garfield Green Line station.

“The Green Line trackwork we’re doing in preparation for the Red Line reconstruction project has already begun improving our Green Line customers’ travel experience,” said CTA President Forrest Claypool. “We are always looking to reduce travel times and improve service, and that’s exactly what we’re doing.”

CTA estimates the number of customers served along the Green Line during the Red Line South project could quadruple to more than 50,000 weekday rides. Rail service is being increased along the Green Line to Cottage Grove and customers travelling to Ashland/63rd will enjoy more frequent service via Red Line trains that will travel along the South Side elevated lines during the Red Line reconstruction period.

“We are pleased to invest in track and station improvements for our customers on the Green Line as we prepare to rebuild the Red Line,” said Chicago Transit Board Chairman Terry Peterson. “We look forward to working with our customers as they adjust their travel plans during the Red Line South project and continue to work to reduce any inconvenience they may experience.”

Funding for the project was provided by the State of Illinois, including a \$426 million state capital grant for the Red Line South project, part of more than \$1 billion in federal, state and local funding announced in late 2011 by Mayor Emanuel and Governor Pat Quinn for the Red and Purple lines. Customers can learn more about the Red Line South reconstruction project at www.redlinesouth.com.

“I’ve long supported making it a priority to upgrade existing, aging CTA infrastructure,” said U.S. Senator Dick Durbin. “As a member of the Conference Committee that worked out the differences between the House and Senate transportation bills last year, one of my top priorities was to advance a bill that included a renewed focus on bringing older public transportation assets into a state of good repair. As a result of those negotiations, more federal funding was made available for that purpose – and the Green Line improvements being announced today will move forward with federal support.”

Improvements include extensive trackwork on the southern Green Line and Ashland/63rd and Cottage Grove branches, such as replacing rail ties, tracks and upgrading signal and switching equipment. The Garfield station is receiving upgrades including a bus staging area for Red Line South bus shuttle dropoffs and additional temporary turnstiles, signage, security cameras and lighting to handle additional passengers, as well as cleaning and improved lighting and signage. The Ashland/63rd station is receiving new roofing, painting, escalator and elevator rehabilitation, new stairs and other repairs. Other Green Line improvements include the installation of CTA Train Tracker signs at all Green Line stations south of Roosevelt.

The CTA has already begun track improvements requiring temporary weekend shutdowns of the Englewood branch of the Green Line to Ashland/63rd, affecting two stations: Halsted and Ashland/63rd. To assist passengers affected by the weekend line shutdowns, CTA is providing free bus shuttles during regular Green Line hours to connect the Ashland/63rd, Halsted and Garfield stations with a courtesy stop at Red Line - Garfield Station. Upcoming weekend shutdowns include:

Friday, April 5, 10 p.m. – Monday, April 8, 4 a.m.

Friday, April 12, 10 p.m. – Monday, April 15, 4 a.m.

Friday, April 19, 10 p.m. – Monday, April 22, 4 a.m.

Bills aimed at mass transit boards in House, Senate

By KEVIN P. CRAVER - kcraver@shawmedia.com

Northwest Herald

Created: Tuesday, April 16, 2013 5:30 a.m. CDT

Bills aimed at reforming Chicago-area mass transit boards, and eliminating one outright, are working their way through the General Assembly.

House Bill 140, which cleared last Friday on a 106-0 vote, seeks to strip health insurance and pension benefits from future appointees to the Regional Transportation Authority, Metra, Pace and the Chicago Transit Authority.

The bill is now in the Senate, which could vote as early as today on a bill aimed at merging the RTA with the lesser-known Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

The original language of House Bill 140 also stripped appointees of their salaries, but was subsequently amended as a compromise measure, said bill sponsor Jack Franks, D-Marengo.

Franks is one of several lawmakers who have sought greater scrutiny over mass transit boards in the wake of the 2010 scandal surrounding former Metra Executive Director Phil Pagano. Pagano stepped in front of a Metra train before he was about to be fired for taking more than \$475,000 in unauthorized vacation payouts.

"The big thing I really wanted to get rid of was the benefits – health care and pensions. Those are payments due full-time employees. That was the most egregious thing I was working on," Franks said. "The cherry on the sundae would have been having them lose their salaries, but I was worried that if I had that on there, it would have gotten shot down in the Senate."

Local Sen. Dan Duffy, R-Lake Barrington, is carrying Franks' bill in the Senate.

A member of the RTA board gets \$25,000 a year, while a CTA board member gets \$20,000, a Metra board member gets \$15,000, and a Pace member gets \$10,000. The CMAP board is uncompensated.

The House last month passed a bill aimed at scaling back the pensions of teachers, state lawmakers, state employees and university teachers in an effort to get a grasp on a \$96 billion unfunded pension liability.

House Bill 140 only targets new appointees, not existing members.

Senate Bill 1594 seeks to merge the 15-member CMAP board and the 16-member RTA board into an 18-member, unpaid entity that would have a goal to double mass-transit use in 25 years.

The bill seeks to eliminate what it calls "unnecessary and duplicative functions" between the agencies to "ensure that transit services are fast, well-maintained, efficient, convenient, safe and attractive."

However, many governments in the collar counties oppose the merger, alleging that it would give Chicago an even greater voice with which to swallow up tax revenue slated for mass transit.

The term of McHenry County RTA representative Al Jourdan expired April 1, but County Board Chairwoman Tina Hill said the reappointment process would not begin until the RTA's legislative fate is decided.

The county's representative on the Metra board, Jack Schaffer, said he does not intend to seek reappointment. His term expires June 30, 2014, as does the term of county Pace Board representative and Crystal Lake Mayor Aaron Shepley.

What it means

Two bills aimed at Chicago-area mass transit boards are moving through the General Assembly:

- House Bill 140, which cleared the House last week and is headed to the Senate, seeks to strip the salaries,

pensions and other benefits of members of the Regional Transportation Authority, Metra, Pace and the Chicago Transit Authority.

- A full Senate vote could come today on Senate Bill 1594, which seeks to merge the RTA and the lesser-known Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning into one group.

SOURCE: Illinois General Assembly

Study to focus on Main Street transit access in Evanston

Updated: April 16, 2013 1:02PM

Evanston Review

Piccolo Theatre, which is housed in the Metra Station on Main Street, sometimes plays a secondary role as a wayfaring stop.

People walk in off the street and aren't sure whether they are at the right spot for a Metra train or one of the Purple Line trains that run out of the Chicago Transit Authority station located a half of block to the east.

"That happens all the time," said John Szostek, one of the founders of the theater.

Szostek was one of a number of business people and residents who showed up April 11 at Lincoln Elementary School for a workshop on a Transit Oriented Development study.

The city is partnering with the Regional Transportation Authority on the study, which is looking at ways to enhance the mobility between the stations and the Main Street Business District and surrounding neighborhoods.

The area is one of the few in the Chicago region where major transit systems can be found back to back.

Officials trying to leverage that advantage recently established a tax increment finance district for the Chicago-Main area.

The transit oriented study is an attempt to bring improvements to a system that has been the backbone to Evanston's development, dating back to the late 1900s, said Thomas Coleman, who is serving as the city's consultant on the project.

Coleman and staff conducted the workshop. Aldermen Melissa Wynne and Don Wilson, whose wards fall within the study area, also participated.

At the workshop, participants were asked to rate pedestrian access to the CTA and Metra Main Street stations, access to the train platforms, bicycle routes and bike parking in the area, public safety, signage and wayfaring and other areas they considered priorities.

The study consultants spread maps on tables throughout the room, inviting participants to post notes at different sites where they had concerns or would like to see improvements.

Szostek, the longtime executive director of Evanston's award-winning Custer Street Fair, which is held in the area, added cleanliness as another priority.

Right now CTA crews will sometimes sweep debris from the tracks platform, collecting against the hurricane fence that backs up to the Metra property, Szostek said.

Szostek said he talked with representatives from the Chicago Botanical Garden who suggested a landscape plan for the area that would initially cost \$60,000, and "then be self-sustaining after that."

Dan Joseph noted that Chicago Avenue "has turned into a high rise," which "really works for the street" because of recent developments.

One problem, he said, is that each of the developers appears "to be doing their own thing."

The city could make use of land near Madison and South Boulevard, where car dealers are now parking their vehicles, to concentrate high density parking "rather than spreading it all over the area," he said.

Natalie Watson, a member of Evanston 150's Walk & Roll Committee along with Joseph, suggested officials use the opportunity to make the whole area more bikeable. She suggested shared bike lanes, such as those the city recently put in downtown, along Dempster and Main streets where the going is bumpy.

Resident Donna Baker raised concern about the condition of sidewalks along Main, as well as alternative parking.

"I'm just looking for better parking for scooters," said Brown, who said she might use a scooter for getting around if there were places to park one.

Longtime resident Debbie Hillman asked about the Northwestern-only shuttle bus system that rolls down Chicago Avenue.

Would Northwestern be open to making the busses available to everyone?

Alderman Don Wilson chimed in, saying he would like to see a place set aside between the transit station in the dense area, where people could relax and converse with friends.

A representative for the Chicago Main Newsstand, expressed concern that in the effort to connect the two stations, access to the newsstand not be cut off.

Coleman and staff collected the responses and will collate them, posting them on a special website dedicated to the project, at www.evanstonmainstreetod.org

He said a follow-up meeting would be held in June.

Metra fare hikes draw Springfield's ire

Crain's Chicago Business Greg Hinz

Yet another problem has arisen for Metra, the embattled suburban rail agency that apparently is considering firing its chief executive.

This time, the problem comes out of Springfield, where an effort is underway to make it more difficult for Metra to raise fares.

Under a bill sponsored by Illinois Rep. Al Riley, D-Olympia Fields, which could come up for a final House vote later this week, both the House Committee on Mass Transit and the Senate Transportation Committee and the Senate Transportation Committee would be directed to hold public hearings anytime Metra moved to boost fares or require riders to pay a greater share of the agency's costs.

Metra still has the power to raise fares on its own. But the bill would set up a gantlet of sorts with Metra officials required to justify their action before what quite possibly would be skeptical lawmakers.

"They need to explain their fare increase," Mr. Riley said. A recent 11 percent hike in the 10-ride ticket "sort of flew through under the radar," he added. "It wasn't like they made a big attempt to get out the news that they were raising fares."

The 10-ride hike came a year after the agency raised all fares by an average of 25 percent after several years of fare stability.

The original version of the legislation also would have required hearings for hikes by the Chicago Transit Authority and Pace. But Mr. Riley said that was "a drafting" error, and that his intent was to affect just Metra. He said he might sponsor separate legislation later that also would affect the CTA.

Mr. Riley's bill comes as Metra's board apparently is considering firing or not renewing the contract of Alex Clifford, the agency's chief executive officer.

Mr. Clifford was hired to replace Phil Pagano, who committed suicide in 2010 after being accused of misappropriating Metra money and forging memos to cover it up. Mr. Clifford still has eight months left in his three-year contract.

Metra's board held a special meeting April 12, and the agency and board members have said almost nothing except that Mr. Clifford's status is under review. My sources are divided on what's up, with some saying he was slow to clean house after the Pagano years and others saying he made enemies by moving too fast. But multiple sources say Mr. Clifford has an especially poor relationship with Metra's new chairman, Brad O'Halloran. He didn't return a phone call seeking comment.

Metra is set to hold its regular monthly board meeting April 19. The agenda is not yet available.

Follow Greg on Twitter at @GregHinz.

Rail consultant named to Metra board

April 04, 2013|By Richard Wronski | Tribune reporter

James LaBelle, a transportation expert who has served on Metra's board of directors for the past five years, is leaving the board, it was announced today.

LaBelle's place, Lake County Board Chairman Aaron Lawlor announced the appointment of Norman Carlson to fill the post.

"Norm will be a strong voice for Lake County on the Metra Board," Lawlor said in a statement. "He brings more than four decades of experience with the railroad industry and will bring attention to key capital and operational initiatives that will improve commuter service in Lake County and systemwide."

LaBelle's term officially expired ended last year. He said today he had agreed to continue at Lawlor's discretion.

LaBelle said he was pleased with Carlson's selection.

"He's a terrific guy and he knows the business," LaBelle said. "He'll be a perfect Metra board member."

LaBelle is vice president with the civic group Metropolis Strategies.

According to the announcement from Lawlor's office, Carlson has more than 40 years of experience in financial services and railroads as the worldwide managing partner of Arthur Andersen's transportation industry practice and in private consulting.

During his career, Carlson served in various capacities with Arthur Andersen & Co., including the North American Railroad Industry head and the Worldwide Managing Partner of the Transportation Industry Practice.

He also served as the engagement partner on the Chicago South Shore & South Bend railroad account.

Additionally, Carlson has provided audit, income tax, and financial consulting services to regional, short line, and Class I railroads throughout the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Carlson is a United States Army veteran and a long-time resident of Lake Forest.

In the announcement, Carlson said: "I am honored to be appointed to the Metra board of directors and look forward to bringing my railroad and financial consulting experience to advancing the interests of Lake County residents."

The appointment will be voted on by the Lake County Board on April 9.

rwrnski@tribune.com

Pacific Coachways Trailways adds first new four 2013 MCI® J4500 coaches

SCHAUMBURG, IL — April 04, 2013 — It didn't take long for Pacific Coachways Trailways to decide on the 2013 J4500 for its four-coach purchase. When Tom

Giddens, founder and President, toured the MCI Winnipeg plant, he could see the quality difference MCI's Reliability Driven culture has brought about.



"Tom was impressed with the factory tour," said Michael Giddens, General Manager and second generation in the family-owned Garden Grove, California, charter and school bus operator. "We're going back to where we originally started. The quality is there."

MCI's recent Quality-at-Source initiative at the MCI plants, designed to make MCI coaches even more reliable, is responsible for much of Pacific Coachways' renewed enthusiasm.

When Pacific Coachways Trailways formed in 1989, it operated four pre-owned MCI models. Now, the four 2013 J4500 coaches mark the company's first purchase of new MCI models, bringing its fleet to 12 coaches and seven school buses. "We're growing by this purchase; we've been very busy over the last few years," said Giddens. "We started updating our fleet with newer models before required by California regulations, so our coaches are model year 2007 or newer."

In addition to featuring the latest clean-diesel engine technology for near-zero emissions, the 2013 J4500 also delivers improved fuel economy through powertrain optimization. The model has been redesigned with new LED headlights, a more elevated appearance, impact-resistant bumpers and some 30 other improvements. A new smooth rear cap also modernizes the back of the coach and provides more space for brand messaging. Wide-ride suspension, electronic stability control, a SmartWave® tire-pressure monitoring system, a fire-suppression system and three-point passenger seatbelts are standard. Pacific Coachways Trailways has added 110-volt power outlets and Wi-Fi connectivity.

Profiled as an "Innovative Operator" in Metro Magazine's January issue, Pacific Coachways Trailways credits its success to great customer service and going the extra mile in driver recruitment and training. The company hires its drivers for personality and provides training, if necessary, to earn a CDL. "This way, we have a broader range of applicants," said Giddens. "We invest heavily in driver training."

All of Pacific Coachways Trailways drivers maintain the required California Highway Patrol (CHP) School Pupil Activity Bus (SPAB) certification, whether they will drive

a school bus or not. The certification requires 20 hours of behind-the-wheel training, 20 hours of classroom training and a test by the CHP. Another 10 hours of training is required every year to maintain the certification. In 2010 and 2012, Pacific Coachways Trailways won CHP's STAR Award, which recognizes operators for exemplary safety records. The company also enforces driver safety through the use of DriveCam, which is installed on all coaches and records driving behaviors. "It really works to enforce good driving habits," said Giddens.

Pacific Coachways Trailways is a member of IMG and Trailways and belongs to ABA and UMA, among other travel industry associations. Tom Giddens, President of the California Bus Association, continues to play a vital role in shaping the industry as noted in Metro's article on the company. To learn more, visit www.pacificcoachways.com.

Yosemite DNC adds six "talking" D4005 coaches

SCHAUMBURG, IL — April 04, 2013 — DNC Parks and Resorts at Yosemite, the company that provides transportation and other concessions to America's oldest park, has taken delivery of six Motor Coach Industries D4005 coaches to use for customer tours and shuttles. The 40-foot coaches feature "talking bus" DR600 destination sign systems, which, in addition to announcing stops according to GPS, can transmit data back to a home office.



The D4005s, part of MCI's all-time best-selling D Series coach family, feature clean-diesel Cummins ISX engines and Allison B500 transmissions along with three-point seatbelts and Braun UVL wheelchair lifts. They also offer passengers amenities including power outlets at every seat, footrests, parcel racks, individual comfort controls, reading lamps and a DVD entertainment system with video monitors.

Gary Rosenfeld, director of transportation at Yosemite, says the company chose the D4005 because of its ranking as the coach in its category with the lowest operating cost. It furthermore wanted the coaches

because their 40-foot length makes them navigable along the park's narrow, winding roads.

"Passengers love the coaches," said Rosenfeld. "They love the quiet, the comfort and that they're ADA-equipped. They also like the kneeling aspect. Our guests have been very complimentary."

The coaches, with their vivid Yosemite scenery wraps, also reflect the beauty of the park. According to Rosenfeld, the company maintains its coaches to top specifications and generally keeps them for 10 years or more; wraps, because they can be changed, allow DNC Yosemite to keep the exterior fresh and customize the visual message.

The DR600 sign system, in addition to announcing stops inside the coach based on GPS inputs, can let passengers waiting at a stop know when the next bus is coming. It can also send information back to DNC such as how many passengers are aboard, who is driving and what the coach is doing at any given moment. DNC requests the system on all of its coaches.

DNC Yosemite transports more than four million passengers a year on a fleet that includes 35 coaches and 11 trams. It is part of Delaware North Companies, a global leader in hospitality and food services that is family-owned and reports \$2 billion in annual revenues. U.S. National Park Service and NASA are among its clients that use MCI coaches.

Greyhound Lines orders 130 MCI® D4505 models

SCHAUMBURG, IL — April 01, 2013 — Motor Coach Industries, the leading builder of intercity coaches in North America, will deliver 130 MCI D4505 coaches to Greyhound Lines as part of a two-year contract.



"We're committed to providing our customers with safe and comfortable travel, which is why we continue to work with MCI to deliver quality motorcoaches with modern amenities that our customers will enjoy," said Dave Leach, president and CEO, Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Greyhound's new D4505 coaches will reflect the company's updated look and come equipped with

wheelchair lifts and digital amenities now available on all of its newer Greyhound coaches, including Wi-Fi and power outlets at all passenger seats. The new coaches also come with three-point passenger seatbelts and lush berette seating for 50. Greyhound has also ordered MCI's optional air-ride driver's seat, and added security features including an aisle gate and driver's shield. The new MCI D4505s are powered by clean-diesel Cummins engines paired with Allison B500 transmissions.

"Greyhound Lines has once again selected MCI to deliver on its commitment to provide its passengers with safe, comfortable and environmentally friendly transportation," said Rick Heller, MCI President and CEO. "This is a significant contract. It demonstrates MCI's ability to supply Reliability Driven coaches, parts and service, and allows us to participate in Greyhound Lines' expansion. We are proud to be a part of its success in serving its growing ridership."

Coach USA to add mix of 51 MCI coaches to serve varied applications

SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 14, 2013 — Operating a variety of group transportation services ranging from tour and charter to Megabus.com, and serving an expanding ridership looking for greener, more affordable transportation, Coach USA is adding 20 MCI® J4500 and 31 D4505 coaches across the fleets of three subsidiaries.



Ohio-based Lakefront Lines is taking delivery of 10 J4500s. Lakefront Lines was established in 1964 and has grown to become Ohio's largest motor coach company. Having logged nearly 4.8 million miles in the last year alone, Van Galder Bus Company, Wisconsin, will receive the other 10 J4500s. Van Galder operates a fleet of 36 J4500 coaches used on daily service to O'Hare Airport along with service to downtown Chicago. The 31 D4505s will go to Short Line, Mahwah, New Jersey, serving New York City, Eastern Pennsylvania and beyond.

All of Coach USA's new MCI models come equipped with three-point passenger seatbelts, wheelchair lifts, Wi-Fi, 110v and power outlets, GPS and Saucan Asset tracking systems. Electronic stability control, SmartWave® and a fire suppression system are standard safety features.

"We depend on coaches that deliver safety, reliability and operational efficiency," said Dale Moser, President and Chief Executive Officer of Coach USA. "Our strategy is to offer passengers newer vehicles that are comfortable, good-looking and greener. MCI has been able to offer us all of those qualities to enhance the Coach USA brand."

The MCI J4500, the industry's top seller for nine straight years, has been redesigned for 2013, featuring a taller appearance, signature LED front lighting, and more than 30 improvements including stainless coolant tubes and brushless motors for enhanced reliability. An optimized powertrain consistently returns over 9 MPG cruising at 55 on-highway. The MCI D-Series, with more than 13,000 coaches built, is North America's most popular model ever, earning a reputation for workhorse reliability and low cost of operation.

"Coach USA is proving how valuable motor coach transportation is to a whole new generation of riders," said Patricia Ziska, MCI Vice President of Private Sector sales. "By delivering on our Reliability Driven promise, offering the highest-quality coaches with the lowest operating costs, MCI provides Coach USA the opportunity to stay focused on what they do best, which has been to reinvent a fuel-efficient, economical way for people to take trips or commute to work. MCI is proud to be an integral part of Coach USA's growth."

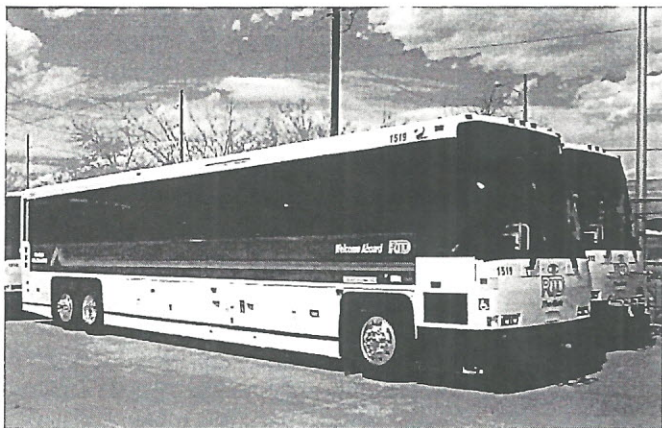
Coach USA, which also operates Coach Canada and Megabus.com, the curbside service pioneer, owns over 30 local companies in the northeast and north central United States and Canada, operating tours, charters, sightseeing tours and scheduled bus routes. Coach USA, www.coachusa.com, is a subsidiary of Scottish-based Stagecoach Group, one of the world's largest bus, coach and rail groups with operations in the United Kingdom and North America.

Denver RTD takes 54 MCI® Commuter Coaches

SCHAUMBURG, IL — March 13, 2013 — Ranked by U.S. News & World Report as the number one city for public transportation, the Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) is taking action to continue that ranking by upgrading its bus fleet. The RTD, which provides 100 million passenger trips annually to the Denver metro region, has taken delivery of 54 MCI Commuter Coaches from Motor Coach Industries, the largest builder of intercity coaches in the U.S and Canada.

Engineered to provide a comfortable, safe ride, the Commuter Coach also offers ease of maintenance and low total cost of operation. Data show the model offers 42 percent greater seating capacity at a cost that's 15 percent lower per seat than a comparable transit bus. Independent testing also revealed the MCI Commuter Coach to be 10 times more reliable than the closest competitor.

RTD's new Commuter Coaches are each equipped with a wheelchair lift, ACTIA multiplex system with an ergonomic driver dash and the latest clean-diesel engine technology for near-zero emissions. All together, Denver RTD has more than 1,000 buses in its fleet. The newest coaches are replacing an equivalent number of 1998 MCI D-models.



Denver RTD is committed to the highest standards in public transit safety and service within the eight-county metro area with more than 140 local, express and regional bus routes serving 10,000 bus stops, and over 70 Park-n-Ride facilities, along with five light rail lines covering 35 miles. RTD riders receive a free-fare coupon if they experience a service delay of more than 30 minutes that's not caused by an event beyond RTD's control.

Denver received its top ranking in a report by U.S. News and World Report, which took into account per capita spending on public transportation, number of safety incidents per million trips, and the number of trips taken per capita. Denver was also ranked among the top 40 cities in the 2012 Urban Mobility report released by Texas A&M University. Learn more at www.RTD-Denver.com.

Cyr keeps colorful with new Setra Top Class S 417, turns 101

SCHAUMBURG, IL — February 14, 2013 —

Celebrating its centennial last year, Cyr Bus is entering its second century with the delivery of a new Setra Top Class S 417. When German-built Setra made its U.S. debut, Cyr, Old Town, Maine, was its very first customer. Today, Cyr remains a fan.

"Setra put us on the map," said Mike Cyr, who helps run the family business with his father, Joe Cyr. Cyr first came to know Setra in the 1980s, when the manufacturer had its North American headquarters in nearby Gray, Maine. Cyr and his father then visited the plant in Germany. "While we were there, there was a bus that was almost complete and we bought it," recalls Cyr. "It was our bus number 230, our sixth Setra. I liked the paint job."

The model's high-end European design and painted exterior literally allowed Cyr to stand out. "That's when

we started going with brighter-colored coaches and eye-catching graphics," said Cyr. It's a custom Cyr still practices. All of Cyr coaches are vividly painted and include the company's centennial logo.



"We continue to grow because we go out and get the business," said Cyr, citing strong competition in New England. While Cyr notes the 2008 economic downturn did hit retail tours, he sees business coming back. "We're more efficient and find new things to offer our customers; that's why we like Setra. We are committed to giving our clients first-class service all the way."

Cyr also appreciates the many high-end amenities that come standard on the Setra S 417, including GPS, Wi-Fi connectivity and outlets all built-in. The model's performance is another selling point. European design and Daimler engineering contribute to Setra's cost effectiveness and solid durability. Every component undergoes Daimler testing in extreme heat and cold-weather conditions. Even its seven-stage paint process is unparalleled, using CDP (Cathodic Dip Priming) for ultimate structural corrosion protection.

The origin of the SETRA name comes from the German translation of "self-supporting structure," or SElbstTRAgend, in reference to Setra's integral frame invention. The model also offers leading safety features, including an exclusive, energy-absorbing Front Collision Guard (FCG) system, advanced rain-sensing wipers and auto-on headlight assistance. For model year 2013, there's a more robust, easier diagnostics system accessible from the driver screen; a Bluetooth, multifunctional steering wheel allows drivers to stay focused on the road.

"I am very happy with our newest Setra Top Class S 417 and our new Setra Comfort Class S 407," said Cyr. Cyr took delivery of his Setra S 407 a few months ago.

All together, Cyr operates four Setra models in its 22-coach fleet, including 10 MCIs, logging about 4 million miles a year. When it comes to MCI and its distribution of the Setra brand, Cyr said, "You can't get much better than MCI, and now they have the two good product lines. It's exciting for our industry."

In addition to its fleet of motor coaches, Cyr operates 225 Freightliner school buses in five locations serving three counties. Cyr, who is celebrating his 25th year with the company, has a teenaged son, John T. Cyr, named after the company's founder, who is taking an interest in the business, especially its computers. As the company moves into its next century, its website has changed to JohnTcyrandsons.com, paving the way for a fifth generation of Cyr success.

Prevost Signs Agreement with Greyhound for 90 X3-45 Motorcoaches

April 10, 2013

Sainte-Claire, QC, – The relationship between Greyhound and Prevost, which began in 2007, continues with the signing of a new order for ninety (90) Prevost X3-45 motorcoaches. The coaches have been designed by Prevost to meet tough standards set by Greyhound's commitment to customer satisfaction.

Gaetan Bolduc, Prevost President and CEO, said, "Prevost is proud to once again supply high quality coaches which realize the criteria established by Greyhound and its passengers. Taking into consideration the safety of passengers and drivers across North America, Prevost and Greyhound have worked together to set the highest standards for our industry."

The 90 X3-45 coaches are equipped with features which advance Prevost's commitment to safety. Prevost AWARE is an innovative safety feature which includes Adaptive Cruise Braking, Following Distance Alert and Stationary Object Alert, providing timely information to the driver and encouraging good driving habits. Other Prevost safety features include the Prevost Electronic Stability Program, the Beru Tire Pressure Monitoring System and the Automatic Fire Suppression System. The coaches also boast dual 1800 watt inverters powering 110 volt outlets and Wi-Fi Internet access throughout the coach cabin for each passenger. Other highlights include an Aesys electronic destination sign and Prevost's exclusive Swap & Plug wheelchair lift. In addition, the coaches will provide a clean, fuel-efficient drive train, showcasing the Volvo D13 engine which surpasses EPA emissions standards.

"We have been pleased with the Prevost X3-45 coaches, which have been used in both our Greyhound Express and BoltBus services," said Dave Leach, president and CEO, Greyhound Lines, Inc. "Our customers like the comfortable ride and modern amenities, and we're focused on the latest safety features, all of which are in a quality product that Prevost delivers for our fleet."

Delivery of the X3-45 coaches is scheduled to begin in May 2013 and be completed in April 2014.

Harrison Global Expands Fleet with 2 Van Hool C2045s and 2 GCA M1235s.

Harrison Global, a Waltham, MA, based corporate travel specialist (www.smartertransportation.com) has recently acquired four motorcoaches for their Cary, North Carolina, location. Brett Tyson, their Director of Organizational Development, points out that the company, started by brothers David and Derek Marcou in 1986, has been experiencing growth at all of their locations. Currently they operate out of five facilities centered around Boston, Washington, DC, and North Carolina's Research Triangle. "We specialize in providing upscale chauffeured transportation to corporate, hotel and college clientele. That business has been steadily growing. Our owners, David and Derek Marcou, have always envisioned adding motorcoaches to Harrison Global's offerings," said Tyson.



"Brad Jackson, who manages our Cary, North Carolina, division, has substantial charter experience, and when we added coaches to his fleet in 2010, business accelerated. We're buying four additional coaches for the Cary fleet and expect to be operating motorcoaches out of our other locations in the near future."

The recent acquisition consisted of two Van Hool C2045's and 2 of ABC's M1235 mid-sized coaches. The 57-seat 2013 Van Hool's are powered by Detroit DD13 engines coupled to Allison B500 Gen IV transmissions. They have Van Hool Grand Luxe leather covered seats with 3 point seatbelts, perimeter lighting and a luxury REI Elite entertainment system with 15.4" video monitors. In addition they're equipped with Alcoa Dura Bright wheels, ASA Wi-Fi, 110 volt outlets, satellite TV, woodgrain flooring, and Van Hool's unique rear passenger window. The M1235's carry 27 passengers and are configured with a rear luggage compartment and lavatory. They, too, have an REI deluxe entertainment system, and 3 point seat belts.

ABC Account Manager, Ryhan Cornell, said, "It's great working with a company like this who is growing during tough economic times. They manage to provide consistently superior service, and yet each division maintains the unique flavor of the market it is serving. We're excited to be part of their growth."

Brad Jackson, the person managing the growth of the North Carolina branch commented, "We like dealing with ABC, and Ryhan in particular, because she and ABC have a history of taking care of customer's needs. We like the coaches, but more importantly, the relationship



Equality
FOREVER

we've built makes us certain the service will be there when we need it. That's critical in today's uncertain world."

Tremblay's Invests in 6 Van Hool C2045S as it Marks 45 Years in the Industry.

"This purchase of six new Van Hool VIP coaches is one way of giving back to our customers," Leo Tremblay, President of New Bedford, MA, based Tremblay's Bus Company (tbcbus.com/) pointed out. "It's a perfect way to cap off our 45th year in business and our way of letting our passengers know how much we value them."

Founded in 1967 by Leo and the late Claire Tremblay with a single station wagon, Tremblay's began as an effort to serve factory workers in Southeastern Massachusetts. They now operate a modern fleet of 250 school buses, 100 vans and 16 motorcoaches. The Motorcoach Division transports passengers to destinations throughout the US and Canada.

"Giving back" has been a Tremblay hallmark for 45 years and not just to their customers. Throughout the region, they're noted for generosity to veterans, police, fire, and youth groups and for donating services to a wide variety of worthy causes.

"This is about making sure our passengers have the ultimate travel experience. We want to establish the 'gold standard' for coach transportation," said Tremblay's Vice President Luke Tetreault. "Our 'roadmap to the future' involves superior service and a modern fleet of the finest coaches we can buy. We feel that these new Van Hool's are just what we need and we've had a long, happy, experience with ABC's after-sale service."

The six C2045 VIP coaches are powered by Detroit DD13 engines coupled to Allison B500 Gen IV transmissions and feature custom-tufted passenger

seats, enclosed Microleather covered parcel racks, woodgrain flooring, Alcoa Dura Bright aluminum wheels, 110 volt outlets, and REI's deluxe entertainment system. The 57-passenger seats are equipped with 3 point seat belts and the coaches have backup cameras and Van Hool's unique rear passenger window.

Janos Bokor, ABC Account Manager pointed out, "At a time when coach companies may be holding back, the Tremblays are investing to ensure that they offer safe and luxurious transportation in the region. They've been loyal to ABC and Van Hool for more than 20 years, and we take great pride in being part of their success. They're not just great customers; they are a great family, and a tremendous asset to their community."

Pace Eldorado Access suburban type buses

The final buses of the Pace Eldorado Access appear to be arriving. The attached photo was posted on Face Book by The Bus Lounge Group. The Eldorado rep was supposedly showing it off to Golden Gate.



Photo: Don Lewis 4.09.2013