

# Green Pennant Special

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

**MARCH-APRIL 2014**

**RUN 02-14**



CTA 7900 arrived in Chicago in early February for CTA inspection. It has been at South Shops since arrival with side trips to 567 Lake Street and the other CTA garages for Maintenance personnel to inspect. Bruce Moffat photos.



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](http://osabus.org). At [osabus.org](http://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.

## • MAR/APR MEETINGS

**The March meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on March 7, 2014, 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 Melvin Bernero on various subjects.

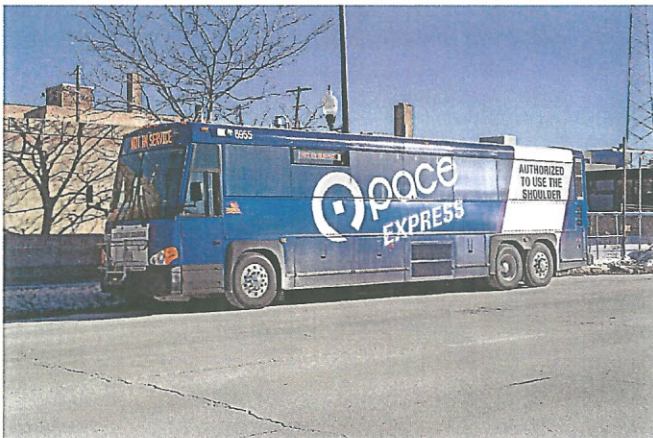
**The April meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on April 4, 2014, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

Our program for the evening will be presented by Tom Poliac on Milwaukee transit.

## • NEWS

As can be seen on Page one of this issue of The Green Pennant Special, the CTA has received the first example of their new NovaBus order. The bus has been at the CTA since early February for inspection by CTA officials and shop forces. The two photos were kindly supplied by Bruce Moffat.

Pace has received their new order of MCI D4000 series commuter coaches for routes 755 and 855, their "Bus On Shoulder" express routes to and from Plainfield PnR and Chicago. It appears by looking on Web Watch that the leased MCI have been returned to Housman.



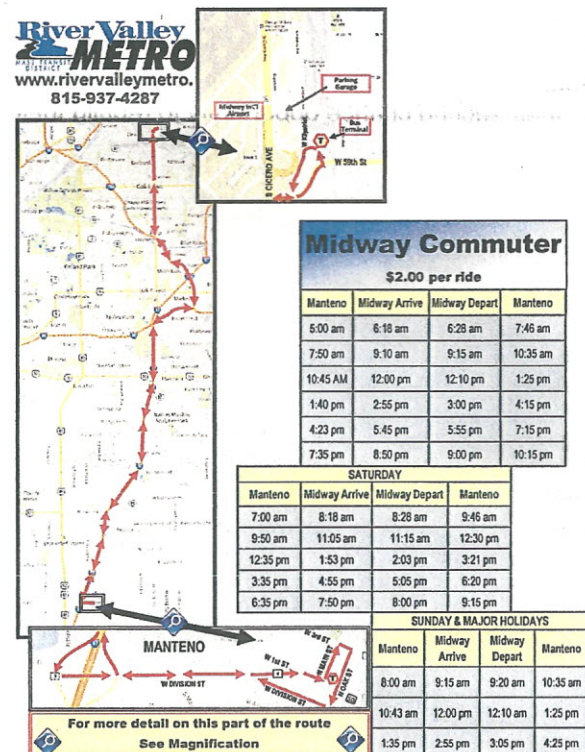
Melvin Bernero photo

On January 4, 2014, River Valley Metro began operating a route between Manteno, where passengers can connect with other routes to and from Kankakee, and the CTA/Pace bus terminal at Midway Airport

Six round trips are operated weekday, five on Saturdays and three on Sundays and major holidays. Fare is \$2.00 per ride.



Melvin Bernero photo



**CTA, Bus Union Save Rail Car Apprentices' Abilities to Support Their Families by Allowing Them to Become CTA Bus Apprentices**

1/2/2014



### ***Ex-offenders, others trying to turn around their lives were faced with losing their jobs from rail union leader's refusal to continue second-chance program***

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), in partnership with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 241, today announced that 65 individuals working as rail car apprentices, who were slated to lose their jobs Dec. 31, have been moved to the agency's bus operations to continue their employment. The move comes after Robert Kelly, President of ATU Local 308—the union representing rail workers—continually refused to continue the life-changing program.

The CTA's apprenticeship initiative provides employment opportunities for ex-offenders, recovering drug addicts, survivors of spousal abuse and others. Mr. Kelly's inaction threatened to put hard-working individuals trying to turn their lives around out of work.

The CTA in 2013 quadrupled its apprentice opportunities to include 265 jobs—200 bus apprentice opportunities along with 65 rail apprentice positions. Unfortunately, despite CTA's repeated attempts to save the rail initiative, Mr. Kelly's refusal to preserve the car servicer program has resulted in a loss of 65 of those opportunities.

As a result, although 65 apprentices will be able to complete their second chance opportunity to rebuild their careers and their lives by providing honestly for their families, Mr. Kelly's decision to terminate the Local 308 program means that hundreds of individuals from this region's poorest neighborhoods will be denied that opportunity in the coming years—325 over the course of just five years—which is a travesty and a tragedy.

In the CTA's bus apprentice program, these workers will continue to rebuild their lives by becoming bus servicer apprentices, cleaning and detailing CTA buses while learning valuable job skills that they might not get elsewhere, and which will allow them to build resumes and careers.

"Despite Mr. Kelly's commitment to end the rail car servicer apprentice program and put his own union members out of work, we've been able to work with Local 241's leadership to find a place for these individuals, guaranteeing them the opportunity to work and put food on their families' tables for another year," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "While this program provides benefits to our transit customers, it also provides a great benefit to our society. By getting ex-offenders into the workforce, the CTA is able to help Chicagoans increase self-sufficiency and reduce recidivism."

Over the past several months, civil rights leaders from across the Chicago area, including the Chicago Urban League, along with prominent African-American elected officials such as Congressmen Bobby Rush and Danny Davis, the City Council black caucus, and leaders in the state Senate have called on Mr. Kelly to set aside his

discriminatory practices and represent these apprentices—his dues-paying union members—and those who have yet to come behind them seeking their second chance in life.

Effective immediately, the CTA will migrate workers whose rail apprenticeships were due to continue past the end of 2013 into the bus servicer apprenticeships. As bus servicer apprentices, these individuals will now join Local 241 as dues-paying members of the bus union.

"We would like to thank Local 241 for being a great partner in CTA's effort to serve our customers while also making an impact on the community by helping those who need it most to find a way back into the workforce," said Chicago Transit Board Chairman Terry Peterson. "This is a vital second-chance opportunity and a win-win for all involved."

The CTA's program is one of the largest ex-offender retraining programs in the nation and provides job opportunities to individuals convicted of non-violent crimes, those completing drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, victims of domestic abuse, and others.

### **CTA Selects Artists for New Original Artwork at Red Line South Stations**

1/7/2014

Following last fall's successful completion of the Red Line South Reconstruction Project, the Chicago Transit Board awarded contracts to local artists and an artist team to create new, original artwork that will be installed at eight train stations rehabilitated under the historic project.

The new art will complement existing artwork at the Sox-35th, 47th, Garfield, 63rd, 69th, 79th and 87th stations. The art that is commissioned for Cermak-Chinatown will be that station's first artwork.

These stations, along with the 95th Street Terminal, were temporarily closed for five months last year, to allow crews to completely rebuild the 10.2-mile stretch from just north of Cermak-Chinatown to 95th Street. All stations along the branch were upgraded with new lighting, painting, electrical substation work and other improvements.

"Last year, we completely rebuilt the Red Line South—a historic investment in the South Side that improved the speed and reliability of train service," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "Now, we will add the finishing touches to this project by working closely with these remarkable artists to commission new original works of art that will capture the spirit of each of the unique and diverse communities surrounding each station."

The CTA issued a Call for Artists in June 2013, which was re-advertised in November, to solicit qualifications from artists and received more than 300 submissions. An evaluation committee reviewed all submissions and based on artistic merit, qualifications and professional recognition of the artists, the following contracts will be awarded:



**Cermak-Chinatown:** Indira F. Johnson (Evanston)

**Sox-35th:** Paula Henderson (Chicago)

**47th:** Andrew Hall (Chicago)

**Garfield:** Cecil McDonald, Jr. (Chicago)

**63rd:** Emmanuel Pratt (Chicago) and Olalekan Jeyifous (Brooklyn, NY)

**69th:** Douglas Fogelson (Chicago)

**79th:** McArthur Binion (Chicago)

**87th:** Thomas Lucas (Chicago)

The artwork for the eight South Red Line stations is paid for with Transit Enhancement Funds from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The total project budget is \$590,400 and includes artist fees, fabrication, shipping/delivery, administrative fees and a project contingency fund. Installation of the artwork is scheduled to begin in late 2014 and will require a separate contract.

Currently, the CTA already has more than 50 works of art at 41 stations along the Pink, Red and Brown Lines. This collection of public artwork will continue to expand to include 21 new, original works of art in the coming years as part of the recently completed Red North 7 and Red Line South Reconstruction projects and also as part of the upcoming Wilson Station Reconstruction, 95th Street Terminal Improvements and the *Your New Blue* projects. The CTA has hired internationally renowned artist Theater Gates to develop an artwork program for 95th Street, which will be rebuilt and expanded in the next couple of years.

## **CTA Illinois Medical District Blue Line Station to Undergo \$23 Million Renovation**

1/7/2014

### ***Project to improve accessibility for patients, employees and visitors to nation's largest urban medical district on the West Side***

The Chicago Transit Board today approved a \$23 million plan to rehabilitate and improve the accessibility of the Blue Line's Illinois Medical District CTA station by making all three station entrances accessible to customers with disabilities and additional upgrades, using \$23 million of city tax-increment financing (TIF) funds made available through Mayor Rahm Emanuel's "Chicago Neighborhoods Now" program.

Constructed in 1958, the station is the closest CTA rail stop for the nation's largest urban medical district, the Illinois Medical District (IMD), which is home to four major hospital systems – the University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System, the John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital of Cook County, Rush University Medical Center and the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. The Illinois Medical District has more than 29,000 employees, has more than 2,200 hospital beds and gets

about 75,000 visitors each day. It is also the state's largest biotechnology/medical complex and an incubator for about 30 emerging technology-based companies. The IMD station also serves Malcolm X College and the United Center.

Over the last five years, ridership at the IMD Blue Line station has increased by 53 percent, to nearly 1.1 million station entries last year, making IMD the third-busiest station on the Blue Line's West Side Forest Park branch.

"Public transportation is the backbone of the city and connects the city's many neighborhoods, allowing residents to get to work and school," said Mayor Emanuel. "This much-needed rehabilitation project will help tens of thousands of commuters daily and strengthen the medical district, the neighborhood, and the entire Blue Line."

"We are pleased to begin much-needed improvements to the Illinois Medical District Blue Line station, which is a critical transit hub for thousands of patients, employees and students who visit the state's premier medical, education and technology center each day," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "I'd like to thank Mayor Emanuel and Ald. Walter Burnett in securing the funding to make this project happen and better serve our customers."

"The IMD Blue Line station is a transit lifeline for the thousands of residents and workers who use it each day," said Ald. Burnett. "We're pleased to work with the Mayor and the CTA in bringing the modern upgrades that this station needs to better serve this West Side community."

The project will make improvements to all three entrances of the IMD station. These include rebuilding the main stationhouse on Ogden Avenue to make it accessible to customers with disabilities, by adding an elevator and new stairs. The project also includes the reconstruction of two station-to-platform ramps at auxiliary entrances at Damen Avenue and Paulina Street to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.

Additionally, the project includes improving station and platform lighting; installing additional security cameras and CTA Bus and Train Tracker displays, and making repairs to the station platform canopy. The two auxiliary entrances, at Damen and Paulina, will also be refurbished with new flooring, wall/ceiling finishes, fare-payment equipment and customer assistant kiosks.

With the exception of the Damen entrance, which was renovated in 1998, the station has otherwise only received minor patchwork repairs since it first opened 55 years ago.

The intergovernmental agreement for the project funding is subject to City Council approval.

## **15 Former CTA Rail Apprentices Complete First Full Week as Full-Time Rail Car Servicers**



1/16/2014

### **New Hires are "Best of the Best," Demonstrate Value of CTA Apprenticeship Initiative**

The Chicago Transit Authority recently added 15 new Rail Car Servicers—the latest workers to be hired full-time after graduating from a CTA apprenticeship program designed to provide a second chance to individuals in need.

These new hires, who just completed their first full week of employment, reflect the success and effectiveness of CTA's apprenticeship initiative, which provides employment opportunities for ex-offenders, those completing drug- and alcohol-recovery programs, survivors of spousal abuse and others.

Each of the new Rail Car Servicers has completed a full Rail Car Servicer apprenticeship and has also participated in the Bus Servicer apprenticeship program. Their experience with the agency, exceptional work records and knowledge of CTA practices and procedures made them the most attractive candidates for these positions.

Under Mayor Rahm Emanuel's leadership of the CTA, 236 apprentices participated in the Rail Car Servicer apprenticeship program, with 194 successfully completing their employment. Of those who completed a program, 42 individuals became full-time CTA employees and an additional eight workers obtained part-time CTA employment. During that same period, according to partnering social service agencies, nearly 100 apprentices secured other employment outside of the CTA after completing the program.

"This administration has a great record of helping ex-offenders and others find a pathway back into the workforce and we continue to do that through our Bus Servicer apprenticeship program with our bus union, ATU Local 241," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "While we can no longer hire Rail Car Servicer Apprentices, we are still providing job opportunities for people from some of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods, and we are very proud of that."

Unfortunately, the Rail Car Servicer apprentice program was eliminated two weeks ago by Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 308 President Robert Kelly, who refused to continue the program that was in place since 2007. CTA continues to offer up to 200 Bus Servicer apprenticeships, working with ATU Local 241.

"Our apprentice program is a lifeline for people who need it so desperately, especially those who leave the correctional system and return to their families, wanting to start a new life," said Chicago Transit Board President Terry Peterson. "We are proud that we can offer a brighter future to these individuals through our bus program through this very successful initiative."

The CTA's program is one of the largest ex-offender retraining programs in the nation and provides job

opportunities to individuals convicted of non-violent crimes, those completing drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, victims of domestic abuse, and others.

### **CTA Poised to Benefit from Funding of New "Core Capacity" Program**

1/17/2014

#### **Program Created by Senator Durbin in 2012 Receives \$120 Million in Funding**

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago Transit Authority President Forrest Claypool and U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL-05) today said that as the only transit system currently accepted into the FTA's Core Capacity Program, the CTA is poised to benefit from the infusion of funding included in the FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations bill, which was passed on a bipartisan Senate vote yesterday and now moves to President Obama's desk for his signature. Every member of Illinois' congressional delegation supported the bill.

The bill provides \$120 million to the competitive grant fund Durbin created in 2012 as a member of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) Conference Committee. His goal was to level the playing field by allowing existing mass transit lines (or "core capacity" projects), like the CTA's Red and Purple Lines, to compete for FTA funding under the "New Starts" grant program. Previously, only extensions or new transit lines could compete for the funding, making the vast majority of CTA projects ineligible.

CTA became the first transit system accepted into the FTA's new Core Capacity Program in November 2013 and has begun moving forward on the environmental work necessary for design and construction of the planned rebuilding of the Red and Purple Lines.

"For decades, existing, aging transit systems like Chicago's have had the decks stacked against them in terms of federal funding available for updates and improvements," Durbin said. "I worked to establish the Core Capacity program in the 2012 transportation bill because that equation needed to change. Mayor Emanuel and CTA were quick to seize the opportunity. Now, as the only transit system currently accepted into the program, the CTA is poised to be the first to benefit from this funding once the President signs this bill into law. Chicago's future depends on our ability to improve our existing infrastructure to meet new demand. This job-creating project will do that by helping CTA double the capacity of its most used rail lines."

"The City of Chicago is focused on building a 21st century public transportation infrastructure to match our rapidly growing economy," Emanuel said. "We are grateful for Senator Durbin's leadership on this issue, since this investment by the Federal Government will help to continue to put more people to work, improve stations and rail lines, and promote continued economic growth."



"We appreciate Sen. Durbin's efforts to make this project both eligible for federal funding and his more recent work to secure funding in 2014 for Core Capacity projects that can greatly benefit the proposed capacity expansion of Chicago's busiest rail line, and thank the Senator and Mayor Emanuel for their leadership on transit investment," Claypool said. "The Red Purple Modernization program is critical in the near future to alleviating overcrowding - but the long-term benefits are critical for Chicago's future, benefitting generations of future CTA customers."

"Core capacity grants will fund desperately needed improvements to heavily-used transit systems like the CTA, creating jobs and improving our infrastructure in the process," Quigley said. "As Illinois' only member of the House Appropriations Committee, I'll continue fighting for increased funding for programs like this that invest in Chicago's future."

In June 2013, the Senate Appropriations Committee, of which Durbin is a member, approved a Fiscal Year 2014 Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill that included approximately \$2 billion for the 'New Starts' grant program. Of that funding, \$120 million was set aside for the Durbin-authored core capacity program that the Red and Purple Lines were accepted in November of last year.

MAP-21 made significant changes to streamline the federal permitting and rating process for 'New Starts' projects. These new provisions were included at Durbin's urging to increase the efficiency and reduce the time necessary to move toward construction of nationally significant transit projects. CTA will now have two years to complete planning and environmental work necessary for the Department of Transportation to determine if there is adequate justification and local financial commitment for the project to receive a full funding grant agreement from the federal government.

## **CTA Selects Your New Blue Contractor for Damen, Western and California station renovations**

2/5/2014

### ***Chicago Transit Board also approves contracts with three artists for new station artwork as part of CTA's Your New Blue program***

The Chicago Transit Board today approved the award of a \$25.6 million design/build contract for the rehabilitation of the Damen, Western and California stations as part of the Your New Blue project to improve and upgrade the O'Hare branch of the Blue Line. The Board also approved contracts for artists to develop unique artwork for each station that reflects the neighboring community and will beautify the stations for customers' enjoyment.

The station work is part of the \$492 million Your New Blue plan announced in December by Mayor Emanuel and Governor Quinn – the largest comprehensive investment for the Blue Line since it was extended to O'Hare in 1984. Part of Mayor Emanuel's Building a New Chicago program to improve and modernize infrastructure, the project includes several track and station improvement projects along a 12.5-mile stretch of the Blue Line O'Hare Branch between the Grand and Cumberland stations, as well as upgrades to the signal system between the Jefferson Park and O'Hare stations.

F. H. Paschen, S.N. Nielsen and Associates, LLC was awarded the station rehabilitation contract following a competitive procurement process. The Damen, Western and California stations were originally constructed nearly 120 years ago and have undergone varying degrees of repairs over the years. Improvements will include exterior stationhouse restoration such as painting, tuck-pointing, replacement of windows and doors, sidewalk repairs and platform repairs or replacement.

"These will be the first of several projects over the next four years to bring improved stations and faster, smoother commutes to the more than 25 million riders who use the O'Hare branch each year," said CTA President Forrest Claypool.

After reviewing 100 responses to a Call for Artists issued in December for artistic merit and related qualifications, the CTA will award contracts to the following artists to create public art:

**Western:** Edra Soto & Dan Sullivan (Chicago)

**California:** Patrick McGee (Chicago)

**Damen:** Benjamin Ball/Gaston Nogues (Los Angeles, CA)

The CTA this spring will host public meetings to gather community input into the artwork designs. Renderings of the proposed artwork will be made public later this year.

Federal Formula Funds provided by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will be used to pay for the total art budget for the three stations, which is not to exceed \$480,000, and includes costs associated with artist fees, fabrication, shipping/delivery, administrative fees and a project contingency fund.

Funding for Your New Blue is a combination of local, state and federal sources. The first projects of the four-year plan are expected to get under way in 2014. Project schedules are still being finalized, but the project is expected to begin with track work, following by station renovations, power upgrades and then signal improvements.

## **CTA and ATU Local 308 agree to reinstate rail apprentice program**

2/13/2014



## ***65 rail apprenticeships to again be available to ex-offenders, others in life-changing, second-chance program***

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 308 have agreed to reinstate a second-chance program—rail car servicer apprentices—that provides employment opportunities for ex-offenders, people completing substance-abuse programs, victims of spousal abuse and others—a second-chance program that has already helped hundreds of Chicagoans.

The program, which had ended on Dec. 31, 2013, will be fully reinstated, with 65 apprenticeships available. The apprentices perform a wide range of cleaning and detailing of CTA rail cars—giving CTA customers a cleaner, more comfortable commute while offering employment to hard-to-employ individuals who are able to learn valuable job skills and build resumes and careers.

"We are pleased to work with ATU Local 308 to bring back a program that has helped literally hundreds of people in need," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "This program provides benefits to our transit customers by supplementing the cleaning work of our permanent crews, but also provides a great benefit to our society. By getting ex-offenders into the workforce, the CTA is able to help Chicagoans increase self-sufficiency and reduce recidivism."

Robert Kelly, President of ATU Local 308, said he is pleased the lines of communication have re-opened. "We were able to reach an agreement, one that benefits everyone involved, including the riding public. I believe this is a win-win situation and we can now move forward."

Combined with a similar program introduced last year with ATU Local 241 offering 200 bus servicer apprenticeships, the reinstatement of the rail car servicer program restores CTA's apprentice program to 265 total positions. CTA's apprenticeship initiative is one of the largest ex-offender retraining programs in the nation, and has provided job opportunities to more than

800 ex-offenders convicted of non-violent crimes, individuals completing drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, victims of domestic abuse, and others.

Under Mayor Rahm Emanuel's CTA administration, 76 apprentices have been hired into full-time positions with the CTA, in addition to dozens of private-sector placements with the assistance of social service agencies such as The Cara Program.

The reinstatement of the program was the result of discussions between CTA and ATU about the benefits of continuing the program. "Both sides agree that this program is valuable in many ways to both workers and customers, and is worth continuing in 2014 and beyond," Claypool said.

## **CTA Moves Forward with 4G Wireless Service Upgrade for Subways**

2/17/2014

### ***Agency closer to expanding wireless capabilities to better serve customers***

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) has taken the next steps in Mayor Emanuel's plan to upgrade the wireless communication network in CTA subways and underground facilities, which will increase the speed and reliability for the customers of all major wireless carriers by providing continuous mobile phone service underground in all CTA subway tunnels.

The CTA has begun to seek bids to upgrade the existing wireless network to 4G technology, the latest-generation wireless technology, for Red and Blue Line subway tunnels. This initiative is one of several efforts by Mayor Emanuel and CTA President Forrest Claypool to modernize infrastructure and make the CTA a world-class transit system.

The upgraded subway wireless network will improve the customer experience by offering better and more robust voice and data services, and improve safety by providing more reliable communication between CTA personnel and emergency responders.

"Investing in Chicago's world-class transit system includes upgrading transit technology for the benefit and safety for the millions of Chicagoans who commute via CTA buses and trains each week," said Mayor Emanuel. "This investment is part of my commitment to improving public transportation infrastructure across the city, which will boost ridership and encourage long-term economic growth for the region."

Last fall the agency issued the first step in a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to select a pool of qualified bidders for the project. The second step of the RFP process includes issuing a detail specification of the project to the pre-qualified bidders, seeking their proposals for the design and installation of a modern cellular infrastructure system in the CTA's Red and Blue line tunnels and underground facilities.

"We're pleased to make progress in our efforts to update technology infrastructure that is no longer adequate to meet today's wireless needs, including those of our customers, our employees and emergency responders," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "We're committed to finding the best qualified organization to efficiently design and install the modern infrastructure our subway tunnels need."

Responses are due by mid-March. The CTA anticipates awarding a contract by summer 2014 and work to begin later in the year.

The existing infrastructure dates back to 2005 and is inadequate to support modern wireless needs.

Project costs will be determined after proposals are received from qualified bidders. As the wireless project is



under way, the CTA will keep the current wireless network operational, and the CTA will continue to receive revenue from wireless providers as it does today.

CTA has 12 miles of underground subway, or 24 miles of individual tunnels, on the Blue and Red Lines. Additionally, the subway system includes multiple underground passageways connecting rail lines and providing access to nearby buildings. The CTA currently owns and licenses its subway cellular network to six major wireless service providers, which generates approximately \$1.8 million of annual revenue.

## Wilson Station Reconstruction



The \$203 million Wilson Station Reconstruction Project will be one of the largest CTA 'L' station projects in the agency's history. The planned reconstruction of the Wilson Red Line station is slated to begin in 2014, and will replace the badly deteriorated facility that was built in 1923. The completely rebuilt, modern and accessible station will serve as a new transfer point between Red and Purple Line Express train service.

The Wilson Station Reconstruction Project will provide station access to persons with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Today, the Wilson station is not accessible. The new stationhouse will feature two elevators for vertical access to the platforms; ramps; wheelchair access at the fare gates; Braille signage and two of the three new station entrances and exits will be accessible.

The project would also include significant track and structural work that will allow for easy and convenient transfers between the Red Line and Purple Line Express; enhance the street-level environment on Broadway; and improve CTA operations. New, brighter lighting and the installation of more than 100 security cameras throughout the stations and its three entrances will help improve customer safety. Additionally, the restoration of the 1923 stationhouse facade and former clock tower (at the corner of Wilson/Broadway) would make it a viable space for future retail or business development, thus creating an anchor for revitalization and economic development in the Uptown neighborhood.

## Metra looks to lease rail cars from other states

## Winter weather has exacerbated agency's shortage of spare coaches; patrons complain about crowding

February 20, 2014|By Richard Wronski, Tribune reporter

With standing-room-only a common sight on Metra trains this winter because many cars were out of service for weather-related maintenance, the rail agency wants to lease extra coaches from other cities.

The blasts of arctic air exacerbated a long-standing problem: Metra has relatively few spare cars, and during rush periods especially, nearly every one of them is in use.

Metra officials said Wednesday that the agency has only about 36 "usable" spare cars out of a fleet of 837. Metra Executive Director Don Orseno said the agency wants to increase the number of spares to about 10 percent of the fleet, or about 80 to 85 cars.

That way, Metra would have more flexibility to remove cars from service for maintenance and other upgrades, as well as better handle winter storms like last month's.

Metra will look to rail agencies in other states, as close as Michigan or as far as Virginia, for cars that Metra can lease, he said.

"Wherever we can find the cars we're going to go look at them so we can get the best vehicles for Metra," Orseno said. "We want to make sure our customers are comfortable."

Along with complaints this winter about delays and poor communication, customers complained loudly about car shortages. Passengers described being jammed like cattle in vestibules and aisles.

Orseno said Metra is in the midst of a "huge rebuilding program" in which 176 cars are being rehabbed.

Metra also is moving to acquire 160 new Highliner cars used on the Metra Electric Line. So far it has received 70 cars being built at the Nippon Sharyo plant in Rochelle, Ill.

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## Prospect Hts. Firefighters Battle Bus Blaze

Posted: Friday, February 7, 2014 3:46 pm | Updated: 3:53 pm, Fri Feb 7, 2014. Journal OnLine

A fast-moving brake fire aboard a Pace bus (Orion 6021) in Prospect Hts. presented firefighters with various challenges Thursday afternoon.

Fourteen firefighters battled the blaze shortly after 3 p.m. on Apple Drive west of Milwaukee Avenue, according to the Prospect Hts. Fire District. Originally dispatched to a car fire, crews ended up finding the rear of a Pace public transit bus on fire. The flames had spread rapidly to both sides of the bus as well as underneath the vehicle.



Spreading flames also caused tires on the bus to rupture, according to Fire Chief Donald Gould, further complicating the attack.

No one was injured, the district says, and crews finally had everything extinguished in about an hour.

The deflated tires caused the bus to lower closer to the ground, Gould said, hampering access to the fire and continued flare-ups. Firefighters used so much foam to squelch the flames they ended up looking like snowmen, the fire district said in a report.

Crews used saws to cut open the sides and flooring of the bus in an attempt to get closer to the fire. A nearby hydrant was shoveled out so a secure water supply could be established. Extreme cold outside also caused firefighter air masks to freeze up, the fire district reported.

A large Pace tow truck finally arrived and was able to lift up the bus allowing firefighters to finish extinguishing the blaze. Prospect Hts. police blocked Apple from Milwaukee to Plaza Drive and public works arrived to salt down the street.

In all, seven fire units from Prospect Hts. and one from Wheeling responded to the scene. An Arlington Hts. engine provided station coverage at the Prospect Hts. firehouse on Camp McDonald Road during the incident.

## Going for gold: Royal Star Hawaii to add six new MCI® J4500s to growing premium fleet

**DES PLAINES, IL — February 17, 2014** — As part of a rebranding effort that will differentiate its premium "gold" fleet from its standard "silver" category coaches, Royal Star Hawaii has taken delivery of the first two of six 2014 MCI J4500 coaches meant to represent the company's top-of-the-line offerings. When complete, the company's gold fleet will reach 22 coaches, all 2009-or-newer MCI J4500s.



The new gold- and silver-level designations will replace the company's previous "Royal Star" and "Super Star" designations. "The new design update achieves several major goals," said Marc Rubenstein, Vice President and General Manager. "It updates our 102 Series coaches with a modern look, clarifies the difference between brands with either a gold or silver choice, and unifies

both gold and silver coaches under the same Royal Star brand. It's part of an ongoing plan to keep the fleet always looking fresh."

The two new J4500s, which feature wheelchair lifts, lavatories, and A/V systems will be used primarily for island tours and transfers. The rest of the six-coach J4500 order will arrive later this year. "We're an all-MCI fleet, and we have been for a very long time," said Rubenstein. "That said, we always research the market before purchasing more coaches, and we felt the J4500 was still the best coach for our needs."

The J4500 underwent a redesign last year, gaining new LED headlamps, a slightly taller look and other improvements. The 2014 model arrives with the latest clean-diesel engine technology for lower emissions and better fuel economy, along with MCI's MDSS suspension system for greater maneuverability and a smoother ride. Standard safety features include three-point passenger seatbelts, electronic stability control, tire pressure monitoring and a fire-suppression system.

Royal Star is "Aloha on Wheels®", and has served Hawaii since 1996 from its headquarters in Honolulu. It claims many firsts, including the state's first 100% seat belted fleet and first with wheelchair lifts. It offers its clients an unrivaled on-time guarantee in addition to the two levels of service to accommodate varied budgets. About half of the company's passenger groups are inbound from Asia, with the rest coming from the mainland United States. Royal Star Hawaii is a subsidiary of Stars of Paradise Tours & Attractions, providing "must do" tours on land and sea since 1957.

## Roberts Hawaii says Aloha to 25 new MCI® J4500 coaches

**DES PLAINES, IL — January 23, 2014** — Roberts Hawaii, which welcomes visitors to the Hawaiian Islands from all over the world on its excursions and tours, has taken delivery of 25 new MCI J4500 coaches. Its subsidiary, Chicago Classic Coach, received five of the new models. The purchase represents a return to the J4500 model for the company, which has been an MCI customer for four decades.



"We value our history, relationship, and reputation for providing Roberts Hawaii with high-quality coaches and



service," said Patricia Ziska, MCI Vice President of Private Sector Sales. "The J4500 has been the industry's best-sellers for 10 years. We are confident that the J4500 will prove worthy in enhancing Robert Hawaii's stellar reputation as the Islands' largest provider of first-class transportation."

Roberts Hawaii's newest J4500 coaches are more eye-catching than ever due to a redesign that includes stylish LED headlights and a heightened presence for more curb appeal. Inside, passengers still enjoy the easy-to-board spiral entryway and tiered theater seating for exceptional views from every seat. The model comes equipped with new clean-diesel engine technology for lower emissions and better fuel economy, along with MCI's MDSS suspension system for greater maneuverability and even smoother ride. Standard safety features include three-point passenger seatbelts, electronic stability control and tire pressure and fire-suppression systems.

Roberts Hawaii began serving the tourism industry on Kauai in 1941. Today, the employee-owned and -operated company serves individual visitors, travel agents, meeting planners, destination management companies and escorted tour providers on Oahu, Maui, Kauai and Hawaii's Big Island, with airport shuttle services, personalized sightseeing tours and excursions. In 2007, Roberts Hawaii became the state's largest employee-owned company through its ESOP program.

All together Roberts Hawaii has total fleet of more than 900 vehicles. Learn more at [www.robertshawaii.com](http://www.robertshawaii.com).

## **All-MCI American Heritage Trails marks its 10th Anniversary with a new MCI® J4500**

**DES PLAINES, IL — January 10, 2014** — Bill McKinley and Matt Inlow, two longtime friends, wanted to build their own transportation company. They chose to do it in the tough economic climate after 9/11 and 10 years later, they're marking their success by rebranding their Fort Wayne-based American Heritage Trails with a new 2014 MCI J4500 coach, featuring a newly designed logo and decal wrap. This coach is the first of three the company plans to add this year.



"We wanted to mark our 10th anniversary," said McKinley, director of operations at the all-MCI tour and charter motor coach company.

McKinley and Inlow were ambitious young men with a plan back in 2004. McKinley had driven coaches part-time during college and Inlow owned his own trucking firm. But they faced significant obstacles getting into the coach business. First, they were young. Second, the whole transportation industry was still reeling after the 9/11 attacks.

But MCI stepped in.

"We were in our early 30s and nobody wanted to work with us," said McKinley. "MCI was the only coach company willing to help us get started. That's why we're loyal to MCI," he added. Today, the "100 percent MCI company" features 12 new and late-model coaches.

The company's new J4500 features a wheelchair lift, Wi-Fi and 110-volt outlets throughout the cabin. Saint-Georges, Quebec-based Turbo Images is responsible for developing the graphics for American Heritage's new logo and decal.

American Heritage is one of three transportation companies under common ownership with Great American Transport; a full truckload carrier, and GAT Dedicated, Inc.; under contract to FedEx Ground that includes over 40 class 8 tractors. Companywide employment, including drivers, totals more than 100.

McKinley is noticing a positive trend in their coach business. "We're seeing more long tours instead of one-day trips, so the bulk of our [tour] business is extended sightseeing trips now," he says, adding that the company also is seeing expanded business in its "small-coach" activity for casino trips, airport runs and college sports teams.

"Dealing with our customers is the most enjoyable part of our business," says McKinley. "They help us find new markets to expand into, particularly senior citizen leisure travelers. They have the income and the time and they're driving our business."

American Heritage's website is [www.americanheritagetrails.com](http://www.americanheritagetrails.com).

## **NEW FLYER NEWS**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada – February 18, 2014:** (TSX: NFI) (TSX: NFI.DB.U) New Flyer Industries Inc. ("New Flyer" or the "Company"), the leading manufacturer of heavy-duty transit buses in the United States and Canada, signed an agreement today with ABC Companies, Inc. ("ABC") to serve as the exclusive distributor of New Flyer's MiDi® and Xcelsior® transit bus models to United States private bus and shuttle operators.

Under the terms of the agreement, ABC will market, sell and provide after sales service for New Flyer's MiDi® and Xcelsior® transit buses through its established service locations and select independent dealerships. All



New Flyer products purchased through ABC will be fully supported by New Flyer's industry leading warranty, genuine New Flyer spare parts, and lifetime customer care programs.

"This is a great opportunity for New Flyer to respond to private customer demand and expand our market reach in the United States," stated Paul Smith, New Flyer Executive Vice President Sales and Marketing. "The addition of New Flyer's best selling transit buses to ABC's current portfolio of highway coaches, light-duty cutaway buses, and refurbishment services provides a comprehensive solution for private bus operators."

The New Flyer MiDi® is a mid-sized, low-floor, clean diesel powered bus that is ideal for use in community, airport, university and hotel shuttle services. Available in 30' and 35' lengths, the streamlined design of the MiDi® provides greater maneuverability while maintaining excellent accessibility for passengers with one or two doors and a 1:6 slope wheelchair ramp. Substantially lighter than vehicles in its class, MiDi® was developed through a joint venture with Alexander Dennis, and is based on its proven E200 design with over 16,000 vehicles deployed worldwide.

The New Flyer Xcelsior® is a heavy-duty, low floor bus that is ideal for use in rigorous duty cycles and provides higher passenger capacities. Available in 35', 40' and 60' lengths, the Xcelsior® is offered with clean diesel, compressed natural gas, and diesel electric hybrid propulsion systems.

"ABC is excited to partner with New Flyer to offer the Xcelsior® and MiDi® to the US private bus market," said Dane Cornell, ABC Chairman and CEO. "New Flyer's reputation for quality, reliability and innovation, aligns with our mission of providing market leading solutions to our customers."

ABC will offer New Flyer models through their Specialty Vehicles Division, headed by Mr. Roman Cornell, Senior Vice President, ABC Companies. As a third generation participant in the family-owned business, Mr. Cornell brings 20+ years of industry experience to the company's sales and marketing efforts. "ABC is committed to offering our customer base an expansive selection of transport solutions to support their fleet's unique requirements", stated Cornell. "The ABC/New Flyer alliance complements our overall strategy to offer a diverse range of equipment solutions, and we're pleased to offer New Flyer's wide range of vehicle options to our customers, along with the industry leading after sales support for which ABC is known."

The MiDi® and Xcelsior® models have been designed to deliver life-cycle savings, offering industry leading reliability, better fuel economy, and lower maintenance costs, by incorporating features such as weight optimized structures, disc brakes and long lasting LED headlights. New Flyer vehicles meet or exceed all

applicable US regulations, including FMVSS, ADA, Buy America requirements, and the Federal Transit Administration's new model bus testing program in Altoona, PA.

The New Flyer MiDi® and Xcelsior® bus models will both be available for sale at all ABC's North American sales locations.

## **DES MOINES AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY EXERCISES OPTIONS FOR SIX XCELSIOR BUSES**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada – February 7, 2014:** (TSX: NFI) (TSX: NFI.DB.U) New Flyer Industries Inc. ("New Flyer" or the "Company"), the leading manufacturer of heavy-duty transit buses in the United States and Canada, announced today that Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority ("DART") located in Iowa, has exercised options for the purchase of 6 40-foot Xcelsior® clean diesel heavy-duty buses.

DART will purchase these buses using an umbrella contract with the procurement department of another US State. This umbrella contract is a 'standing offer' available to public transit agencies across the United States, and as a result, New Flyer does not reflect it in its backlog until specific orders are received.

As disclosed in New Flyer's press release of December 6, 2012, DART last exercised options under this contract for six New Flyer Xcelsior® diesel-electric hybrid buses, taking delivery of the buses in February of 2013.

"We feel privileged to once again be selected by DART to build our Xcelsior® model for them," said Paul Soubry, President and CEO of New Flyer. "Their decision instills the confidence that we are producing a high quality product and providing a strong service and support network to meet their needs."

The six buses are anticipated to be manufactured in the second quarter of 2014 and all are expected to be delivered by the third quarter of 2014.

## **Person standing atop train halts Metra traffic on North Side**

February 24, 2014|Staff report

Metra service on the Union Pacific North line was halted the morning of February 24<sup>th</sup>, because of a person who was standing atop an inbound train in the city's Rogers Park neighborhood.

Passengers on the Metra Union Pacific North line train heading out of the city witnessed a person jumping from the top of the outbound train to the inbound train that was headed to downtown Chicago.

Trains were stopped at the Rogers Park stop during the incident since approximately 7:45 a.m. They were on the



move again by about 8:20 a.m., running about 15-30 minutes late, according to the Metra website.

"We can see his shadow," passenger Mike Pastore told RedEye. "There's a building next to the train and we can see the shadow of the man on top of the train. We can't see him directly, but we can hear him running back and forth on top of the train."

Pastore said the man was on top of the first car of the inbound train.

"Conductors are understandably upset and want everyone to stay in their seats," Pastore said.

Chicago Police Department News Affairs Officer Jose Estrada said police were assisting Metra officials in a criminal trespassing incident on the 7000 block of North Ravenswood Avenue.

Mike Gillis, a Metra spokesman, said officials were on the scene investigating a person who was on top of a train.

The person atop the train was later removed and taken to a local hospital for evaluation, said police.

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## **Your New Blue improvements to start in March**

2/24/2014

### ***Track repairs along Blue Line O'Hare branch are first projects of modernization that will provide smoother, faster commutes***

Next month, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) will begin the first project for the Your New Blue improvement program for the Blue Line O'Hare branch—a \$492 million program to provide faster, smoother commutes and improved stations along the Blue Line's O'Hare Branch.

Announced in December 2013, Your New Blue includes a number of track and station improvement projects along the 12.5-mile stretch of the O'Hare Branch between the Grand and O'Hare stations. Your New Blue is the largest, most comprehensive investment in the Blue Line since the O'Hare branch was extended to the airport from Jefferson Park in 1983-84.

"Your New Blue represents a huge investment in CTA riders and visitors traveling to Chicago via O'Hare and the many vibrant communities along the North and Northwest Sides," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "These long-overdue improvements are part of Mayor Emanuel's efforts to modernize our transit system for the 21st century."

Your New Blue is part of more than \$4 billion in transit improvements announced by Mayor Emanuel since taking office in 2011, including projects to build new rail stations and modernize others, purchase new buses and rail cars, and continue investments in technology to benefit customers and provide a better commuting experience

The first phase of Your New Blue involves replacing wooden rail ties, tie plates and other track materials on the Milwaukee elevated track structure between the Damen and Logan Square stops—a section of line that opened in 1895 and still sits on the original structure. That work will require 10 temporary, weekend-only closures (known as line cuts) of small sections of the Blue Line, tentatively scheduled between March and August:

7 weekends—closure between Western and Logan Square

3 weekends—closure between Damen and Western

During the temporary closures, the CTA will provide free shuttle bus service for rail customers, as well as free transfers back into rail stations. The shuttle buses will run continuously and will be able to accommodate all Blue Line passengers. Shuttle buses will stop at each station affected by the line cut to pick up and drop off passengers.

The first temporary closure is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of March 21-24. The closure will begin at 10 p.m. Friday and reopen by 4 a.m. Monday.

Some of the weekend work will also require some temporary street closures and parking restrictions near the elevated structure. The CTA is working closely with local aldermen to finalize details.

"As with all of our projects, our main goal is to minimize the impacts on both commuters and the community as we improve the Blue Line for the long term," Claypool said.

Later in 2014, the CTA will begin rehabilitation projects at the Western, Damen and California rail stations—the latter two of which date back to 1895. Project schedules are still being finalized for that work.

In all, the four-year Your New Blue program will upgrade 13 stations, including adding a new elevator at Addison; improve tracks and signals; install new water-management systems and repairs to ensure dry and clean subway stations; and upgrade traction power to improve service and reliability.

Ridership on the O'Hare Branch has grown rapidly, with more than 25 million station entries in 2012. Weekday ridership has grown 25 percent over the past five years, and 33 percent over the past 10 years—outpacing the growth of the rail system as a whole. Annual ridership on the O'Hare Branch increased by 6.3 million rides over the past 10 years, the second highest for any branch after Red North Main, the section of the Red Line north of Belmont, which added 7 million rides annually during that period.

Funding for Your New Blue is being provided by a variety of local, state and federal sources, including \$86 million from Governor Pat Quinn's Jump Start program.

Your New Blue is the latest of several large-scale, rail-improvement projects. In addition to the recently completed \$425 million Red Line South reconstruction,



the CTA in 2014 will begin building a new terminal at 95th Street Red Line (\$240 million); rebuilding the Wilson station on the Red Line (\$203 million) and working with CDOT to complete a new Cermak-McCormick Place elevated Green Line station (\$50 million) by the end of 2014.

More information about the project is available at [www.transitchicago.com/yournewblue](http://www.transitchicago.com/yournewblue).

## Metra ridership increases 1.2 percent in 2013

Metra provided 82.3 million passenger trips last year to commuters in the six-county region, a 1.2 percent increase over 2012 and the fifth-highest total in the agency's history. The figures, based on ticket sales, were presented Friday to the Metra Board of Directors.

Since dipping to 56.5 million passenger trips in 1983, when Metra was formed, the number of commuter rail riders in the region has jumped 46 percent, averaging 1.5 percent growth per year. Metra posted ridership gains on eight of its 11 lines in 2013.

Some contributors to 2013's ridership gains include a modest increase in employment and office occupancy in Chicago's Central Business District. Special events such as the Blackhawks Stanley Cup parade and rally — a day when a record 425,000 rides were provided — also contributed to ridership gains in 2013. During the Blackhawks event, Metra sold 85,000 special event tickets accounting for 170,000 rides.

The busiest route continues to be the BNSF Railway, between Aurora and Chicago Union Station, which saw 16.6 million trips in 2013. Ridership on the BNSF rose 1.2 percent in 2013 compared to 2012.

The rail line posting the highest percentage increase in ridership in 2013 was the Heritage Corridor, which experienced a 3.1 percent increase over 2012, providing more than 703,000 trips. Other lines reporting significant gains in 2013 included a 3 percent gain on the SouthWest Service at 2.6 million trips and the UP West Line at 8.3 million trips. Metra's other two UP Lines also reported gains in 2013, with the UP North Line reporting a 2.4 percent increase at 9.3 million trips and the UP Northwest Line gaining 1.4 percent at 11.2 million.

For the remaining lines, the Milwaukee District North increased 2.1 percent to 7 million and the Rock Island District went up by 1.4 percent to 8.6 million while the Metra Electric, the Milwaukee West and NCS lines posted decreases of 1.2 percent to 9.6 million, 0.4 percent to 6.8 million and 0.3 percent to 1.7 million respectively.

While 70 percent of Metra's ridership occurs during the morning and evening weekday rush hours, Metra has increased its marketing outreach targeting both the commuter and discretionary travel markets. In 2013, marketing campaigns included *Metra Makes Life Easier* and *Back-to-Work, Back-to-School, Back-to-Metra* campaign that targeted traditional commuting markets as

well as the *Traincation* campaign targeting discretionary travel during the summer months. Metra intends to pursue similar marketing strategies in 2014 with the goal of expanding its ridership base.

## Oberman elected chairman of Metra Board of Directors

The Metra Board of Directors unanimously elected Martin J. Oberman, a former Chicago alderman with a long career as a leader of the reform effort in politics, to be the next chairman of the board.

"I am honored and humbled to earn the respect and the votes of my fellow board members," Mr. Oberman said following his election. "I feel that all of us on the board are ready to move this agency forward in consensus and in unison."

Mr. Oberman, a respected public figure in Chicago for nearly four decades, is well-positioned to be an effective voice for Metra, particularly in demonstrating that the agency has turned a corner and is committed to moving forward. Such skills will be needed, particularly in Springfield and Washington, at a time when Metra urgently needs billions of dollars to address its capital needs.

Mr. Oberman, who was appointed to the board by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel last September, stressed that Metra must move beyond regional divisions and competition and act in the best interests of the system as a whole. For example, businesses are unlikely to be attracted to the city or suburbs without a robust public transportation network.

"A well-functioning Metra is essential to the economic well-being of the entire six-county region," Mr. Oberman said. "Chicago cannot flourish unless there is ample commuter transportation for suburban dwellers who work in the city and come into the city for culture and entertainment. By the same token, suburban areas cannot thrive unless Metra provides first-rate commuter service — including reverse-commute service — to the entire region."

Mr. Oberman said he was intent on establishing Metra as a well-run railroad corporation, operated with the highest degree of professionalism, honesty and transparency and insulated from improper political interference. Noting that there are no simple answers to the complex challenges facing Metra, he said his job will be to encourage all viewpoints and to build as broad a consensus as possible.

"The days of the chairman acting as a power center are over," he said. "I am just one of 11 votes, and all of us will have an equal voice in Metra's affairs."

Mr. Oberman most notably served as an alderman from Chicago's 43rd Ward from 1975 to 1987, where he was known for his independence and for pushing a reform agenda. Highlights of his career at City Hall include creating the Planned Manufacturing District concept, the first in the nation, to protect heavy industrial areas; being



the first Chicago alderman to champion community policing, a groundbreaking concept at the time; and sponsoring and being the catalyst for numerous anti-corruption measures, structural reforms of city government, gay rights and non-smoking ordinances. He received a Best Alderman award from the Independent Voters of Illinois.

He also served as chairman of an ad hoc commission comprised of labor and management representatives that was appointed in 1979 to develop a municipal employee collective bargaining system.

From 1987 to 1988, he was chairman of the Shoreline Protection Commission, which produced a detailed report to rehabilitate Chicago's shoreline while ensuring environmental protection.

In 2013, he served as a member of the Midway Advisory Panel, a committee established to oversee the potential privatization of Midway Airport.

Mr. Oberman received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Yale University in 1966. He then attended the University of Wisconsin Law School, receiving his Juris Doctor in 1969. He served as Note Editor of the Wisconsin Law Review in 1968-1969 and graduated Order of the Coif.

His legal career began in 1969, working as an associate at the firm that is now Sidley & Austin until 1972. He then served as the first General Counsel to the Illinois Racing Board from 1973-1974, handling numerous assignments, including rewriting the Board's regulations, advancing proposals to prevent abuse through drugging, drafting a completely new statute for the industry and conducting investigations of corruption.

He had a private, part-time law practice during his City Council tenure.

He was a partner at Gould and Ratner from 1988 to 1989. Since 1989, he has been in private practice handling complex litigation across a broad array of matters. He has argued appeals in federal and state appellate courts, and has been admitted to practice in the U.S. Supreme Court, Illinois Supreme Court, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third and Seventh Circuits and the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Mr. Oberman is married and the father of two adult children. He still lives in Lincoln Park, the Chicago community he represented in the City Council.

***Board redefines role and reporting structure of new Chief Audit Officer position, taking proactive steps to enforce transparency & accountability as one of several new governance initiatives at agency***

## **Metra to Hire Chief Audit Officer**

Metra's Board of Directors voted at its last meeting to hire a new Chief Audit Officer (CAO). The CAO will have a dual reporting line to the executive director and The

Board of Directors. The primary duties of the CAO are to provide additional oversight of the executive director, board expenses and Metra departments including human resources and procurement.

### **Board Moving in New Direction**

This action reflects the Board's desire to review and reorganize staff needs, and strengthen and update corporate governance, transparency, accountability and reporting protocols. Board members want to foster a strong sense of ethics, professionalism, diligence, and behavior for Metra staff at all levels.

The CAO and audit staff will be Metra employees and subject to all Metra rules, policies and procedures. The staff will include two attorneys and one senior level transportation professional who will monitor agency operations using best practices of the rail transit industry. The CAO is responsible for developing and implementing an annual audit plan and reviews of the executive director's office and Metra departments. The CAO and audit staff will make quarterly reports and updates to the Board's Audit and Finance Committee and senior management.

### **Board Chairman and Executive Leadership Strongly Support New Governance Initiative**

"We are strongly committed to having a critical check and balance system in our business practices. We believe having transparent governance is essential to rebuilding the public's trust and confidence in Metra," said Jack Partelow, acting board chairman.

"I welcome the board's decision to hire a chief audit officer. Metra has a dedicated staff of 4,400 men and women who work hard to operate 700 trains and 300,000 passenger trips daily. Our agency has been through a lot in the last few years and we need to continue to build rapport with our customers and respect in the rail industry," said Don Orseno, executive director.

### **Finding the Right Candidate**

This new position is one of several initiatives the board will implement to enhance corporate governance, accountability and transparency. To review the job description, go to [www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com) and click on employment. To apply for the Chief Audit Officer position, please send a cover letter (which must include the position title) resume and salary history to: [jobs@metrarr.com](mailto:jobs@metrarr.com).

## **Railroad veteran named Metra's executive director**

The Metra Board of Directors today unanimously selected Donald A. Orseno, a lifelong railroader who has worked at Metra for more than three decades, as the next Executive Director/CEO of the commuter rail agency.

Mr. Orseno, 59, has served as the interim Executive Director/CEO since last August. Board members said he



was the clear favorite among three other candidates who were interviewed today.

"It is a difficult balance to find an individual who has an understanding of railroad operations, customer service delivery, and local and national advocacy, but we have found that individual in Don Orseno," said Acting Board Chairman Jack Partelow.

"Don Orseno is the man for the job," said Director Don A. De Graff. "He clearly has the work ethic, and he clearly has the ability and experience."

"What we have in Don is a railroader with an incredible span of service," said Director Jack Schaffer. "His resume almost looks like he has been working his way to this job since he was 19 years old. There's nothing at Metra this man hasn't done and that he doesn't understand."

"Metra is a complex organization," said Director Martin J. Oberman. "Don Orseno has the qualifications we need for this job. He has the relationships with the staff and unions to move this agency forward. We did look at good candidates, but none came up to the standards and qualifications that we found in Don Orseno."

"In our search, we looked at candidates on the East and West Coast, and regionally," said Director Arlene J. Mulder. "It was gratifying and enlightening to see and realize that Don Orseno is the best man for this job. We wanted the very best for this agency and we found it in Don."

"Many people do not know that Don is highly respected among his peers in the railroad industry," said Director Norman Carlson. "He is a member of Association of American Railroads' Safety and Operations Management Committee. There are 20 positions on that committee of senior railroad executives from the U.S., Canada and Mexico, and Don is the only commuter railroad person on that committee. You get on that committee through the recognition of your peers in the industry."

"I am humbled by the board's faith in me," Mr. Orseno said. "I want our riders to know that nothing will be more important to me – and to Metra – than providing safe, dependable and comfortable trains and the best possible customer service."

Tackling Metra's huge capital funding needs and restoring the public trust in Metra are among Mr. Orseno's other priorities, he said.

Mr. Orseno has worked for the railroad industry for 40 years. A native of the Chicago area, he began his career as a Rock Island Railroad trainman. Since joining Metra in 1984, he has quietly risen through the ranks based upon his stellar performance and no-nonsense work ethic.

Mr. Orseno has held progressively responsible management positions throughout his career at Metra, including Senior Trainmaster, Director of Mechanical, Director of Suburban Operations, Director Safety & Rules, Chief Customer Service Officer, Chief

Transportation Officer and Deputy Executive Director/Chief Operations Officer.

Well-known and respected in the railroad industry nationwide, as well as by Metra's rank-and-file and senior staff, Mr. Orseno is an active participant and member of the Safety and Operations Management Committee of the Association of American Railroads, the senior management committee for the North American railroads. He served as vice president and then president of the American Association of Railroad Superintendents (AARS) for the United States and Canada. He is an active member of the Chicago Railroad Superintendents Association, having served ten years as their president.

## **Megabus.com expands service to/from South Carolina**

- **Columbia, SC and Fayetteville, NC latest cities to take advantage of daily express, city-to-city bus service with free Wi-Fi from \$1**
- **South Carolina marks 34th state for popular express bus company**
- **Service begins February 18**
- **Tickets from \$1 can be purchased on megabus.com today**

(February 6, 2014) – Megabus.com, the popular city-to-city, express bus company with fares from \$1, today announced expansion to Columbia, S.C. and Fayetteville, N.C.; as well as additional services to/from Atlanta, Athens, Ga. and Durham, NC. Service begins February 18 and tickets can be purchased at [www.megabus.com](http://www.megabus.com) today.

Columbia and Fayetteville residents will soon be able to travel express between the two cities; as well as to and from Atlanta, Athens, G.A. and Durham, N.C. for as low as \$1 on three daily arrivals/departures. In each service location, megabus.com provides service out of a local intermodal transportation facility, providing customers with additional convenient, inexpensive local transportation options.

"Megabus.com has rapidly become the travel option of choice for more than 32 million people and we're now excited to bring our unique travel option to residents of South Carolina," said Mike Alvich, VP of Marketing for megabus.com/Coach USA. "As Americans continue to look for ways to stretch their dollar, we look forward to providing safe, convenient and affordable travel to the hundreds of thousands of Columbia and Fayetteville residents while providing Atlanta, Athens and Durham customers with additional service options."

"Being home to America's constitution defenders, we appreciate our freedoms of travel and choice," said John Meroski, President and CEO of the Fayetteville Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau. "Megabus.com has fulfilled these rights by giving our residents access to destinations they might not have chosen to drive or have



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flown to, and opened destinations from which the CVB can attract future visitation."

The launch into South Carolina will mark the 34th U.S. state in which megabus.com operates; plus the District of Columbia and Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

"As the official tourism entity for the Columbia region, we're in support of and excited megabus.com will be serving our community and providing new opportunities where visitors can easily access South Carolina's beautiful capital city," Bill Ellen, interim president and CEO of the Midlands Authority for Conventions, Sports & Tourism.

"Customers can travel to these popular destinations in approximately the same amount of time it would take to drive themselves, without the stress of being behind the wheel," added Alvich. "Customers can recline, rest and even sleep, or, if they prefer, keep themselves connected and entertained with free Wi-Fi and power outlets in every seat on our state-of-the-art double-decker buses."

Customers are encouraged to book early to secure the best rates.

"The \$1 fares go quickly, but there are many other great fares available if you book early," said Alvich. "Traveling on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays is another great way customers can secure the best megabus.com fares."

A recent study released by the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development of DePaul University entitled "Motoring Into the Mainstream / 2013 Year-in-Review of Intercity Bus Service in the United States" revealed that express bus carries like megabus.com provided American travelers savings of \$1.1 billion over the past year.

Megabus.com, a subsidiary of Coach USA, launched in April 2006 and is one of the largest city-to-city express bus service providers in North America. In addition to affordable fares, megabus.com offers customers state-of-the-art, green-certified double-decker buses with free Wi-Fi, restrooms and are wheelchair accessible. Megabus.com has equipped every bus purchased since 2006 with three-point lap/shoulder seat belts, providing the top safety standard for megabus.com's 32 million passengers in more than 120 cities across North America.