



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

## **MAY-JUNE 2014**

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 2, 2014, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2751 W. Winona Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

OSA celebrates National Trolleybus Month. Our program for the evening will be a presentation by member William Synolds. Bill will show videos and slides of Chicago trolleybuses.

The **February meeting** of the Omnibus Society of America will be held on June 6, 2014, in the Anderson Pavilion of Swedish Covenant Hospital. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

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

## **CTA Begins Work on Harrison Station, Orange Line Track Projects on Near South Side**

4/10/2014

### ***Rehabilitation of the Harrison Red Line station and the Orange Line 18th Street Connector part of Mayor's \$92 Million investment in near South Side***

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) next week will begin major work on two Near South Side projects, the rehabilitation of the Harrison Red Line station and the Orange Line's 18th Street Connector, as part of a larger \$92 million transportation investment in the Near South Side announced last year by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and CTA President Forrest Claypool.

The \$10 million Harrison Red Line station rehabilitation begun Monday, April 14, will provide a brighter, cleaner

and safer travel environment for the 1.4 million people who use the Harrison station each year.

Improvements will include structural and cosmetic repairs that will upgrade the 70-year-old facility and its three entrances, following tunnel lighting improvements and painting completed at the station last year. The rehabilitation work includes building two main entrance canopies, waterproofing to reduce pooling of water in mezzanine and platform areas; installation of new granite flooring; new lighting; and repairs to all three station stairways.

Work on the station began at 4 a.m. Monday, April 14, with the temporary, 42-day closure of the auxiliary entrance located on Polk Street. During this time, crews will rehabilitate the auxiliary entrance stairway, mezzanine and south end of the platform. Customers will be directed to use the main station entrance located on State Street just south of Harrison. There will be full station closures on five weekends from May through early June.

Upon completion of all project work, the Harrison station will be the first rail station fully-equipped with all new, brighter and more energy efficient LED lighting throughout. The rehabilitated station will also feature modern design elements reflective of the surrounding neighborhood. This project is funded solely with tax increment financing available through Mayor Emanuel's *Chicago Neighborhoods Now* program.

Work on the Orange Line's 18th Street Connector, which was built 45 years ago and carries Orange Line trains to and from the Loop, will begin on Friday, April 18.

The \$25 million project will make significant repairs to the half-mile structure that will provide a smoother, more reliable ride for customers. The project work will include painting, structural improvements, waterproofing and track work, which includes the replacement of worn rail ties and components. Repairs will address aesthetic and water seepage issues raised by Ald. Pat Dowell and local community members.

The Orange Line had more than 8.8 million station entries in 2013 and connects the Chicago Loop with Midway International Airport.

Project funding for the 18th Street Connector project is a mix of Illinois Department of Transportation funds and local tax-increment financing (TIF) made available through Mayor Emanuel's *Chicago Neighborhoods Now* program.

Project work, will require weekend-only temporary suspension of rail service between the Roosevelt and Halsted stations over five weekends between mid-April and early June.



The first track closure is scheduled to begin at 10 p.m. Friday, April 18 and will conclude prior to the start of service at 4 a.m. Monday, April 21. The CTA will provide free bus shuttle service between Halsted and Roosevelt during the period train service is suspended for each of the five weekends.

The Harrison station and Orange Line infrastructure projects were announced late last summer by Mayor Emanuel as part of a \$92 million transportation investment on the Near South Side, including the new Cermak/McCormick Place Green Line station currently under construction, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) improvements to Roosevelt Road and a new auxiliary entrance at the Roosevelt CTA station.

## **Mayor Emanuel, CTA Announce Next Steps in Modernizing the Red Line, CTA's busiest rail line**

4/17/2014

***CTA Unveils First Phase of its Red and Purple Modernization Program That Will Ultimately Rebuild the Northern Section of the Red Line and the Parallel Purple Line***

***Red Line Extension Plan to Extend the Red Line South of 95th Street to 130th Street Moves Forward with its Environmental Process***

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and CTA President Forrest Claypool today announced the first phase of its Red and Purple Modernization (RPM) program, which will completely rebuild the northern section of the Red Line and the parallel Purple Line, and beginning of the next step in a federal process to secure funding for the Red Line Extension plan, which would extend the Red Line south from 95th Street to 130th Street.

These are the latest steps in the ongoing modernization of the CTA under Mayor Emanuel.

"As a world-class city, Chicago has a world-class transit service to connect residents to jobs, education, culture and above all opportunity," said Mayor Emanuel. "CTA is investing in modernizing the Red Line as part of our strategy to create a seamless, safe, and reliable transportation system for every neighborhood."

The CTA's Red Line, which runs 24/7 along 23 miles of tracks, is Chicago's busiest rail line with about 75 million annual rides.

The Red and Purple Modernization program and the Red Line Extension project are the latest in a series of Red Line projects to modernize and extend the backbone of the CTA's rail system that have been undertaken since 2011.

With a significant portion of the Red Line built more than a century ago, the improvements would address the current need to expand capacity by building new infrastructure to accommodate growing ridership.

Additional Red Line modernization projects under Mayor Emanuel include:

Successful \$425 million replacement of the Red Line South railroad in 2013, as well as station rehabilitations.

\$86 million renewal and rehabilitation of seven far north side stations in 2012.

\$240 million new 95th Street Terminal, work beginning in late summer.

\$203 million Wilson station reconstruction and track and signal replacement, major construction to begin this fall.

"These projects are the next steps in our overall vision to rebuild, modernize and expand the entire Red Line," said P President Claypool. "We're already kicking off Red and Purple Modernization by beginning reconstruction of the Wilson station this fall and continuing progress on the South Side by starting the new 95th Street Terminal this summer, following the successful completion of the Red Line South reconstruction last year. With both the Red and Purple Modernization and Red Line Extension projects, we'll replace outdated infrastructure with a modern, efficient rail, and build more than five miles of new track. Together these improvements will offer CTA customers faster, more reliable service, and increasing access to quality rail transportation for thousands of future riders."

The CTA is also moving forward with its proposed Red Line Extension plan by beginning the second step of its environmental process to ultimately finish the Environmental Impact Study, which is required to begin engineering on the plan to extend the Red Line south of 95th Street to 130th Street. Both projects will include a broad community outreach process that will begin next month to solicit community feedback on both projects and provide updates on the funding process for each project.

### **About Red and Purple Modernization**

The RPM program will proceed in phases to fully replace old, deteriorating infrastructure and stations along the entire north branch of the Red Line and the parallel Purple Line, and will pave the way for CTA to significantly increase train capacity for the next 80 years.

This section of the Red and Purple lines carries one out of every five CTA rail rides and serves customers in some of the densest, most diverse neighborhoods in Chicago. Rush-hour ridership has jumped 40 percent in the last five years alone.

Most tracks and bridges along the Red and Purple lines are nearly 100 years old. Despite rising demand, the CTA is unable to increase capacity because of the current infrastructure's age and structural limitations. Continuing to operate a busy rail line on this outdated infrastructure results in high maintenance costs, the need for frequent repairs that disrupt service and slow travel, as well as outdated stations that can't accommodate elevators or other necessary and modern amenities.



RPM will create a completely rebuilt rail line, resulting in faster, smoother rides, modern, fully ADA accessible stations along the entire corridor and more frequent train service to alleviate overcrowding.

The first phase of the RPM improvements will include two main components:

**Station and track modernization, Wilson to Bryn Mawr:** Completely rebuilding the Wilson, Lawrence, Argyle, Berwyn, and Bryn Mawr stations and rebuilding all tracks, support structures, bridges and viaducts for the Red and Purple lines between Lawrence and Bryn Mawr. Replacement of the Wilson station and surrounding infrastructure begins this fall. These stations were built originally between 1908 and 1923 and the elevated support structures date back to the 1920s. The Bryn Mawr station was last updated 40 years ago, in 1974; the remaining three stations received interim station renewal work in 2012. Reconstruction of these stations will include adding elevators at each to make them accessible to customers with disabilities. The project also includes rebuilding the tracks, signals and support structures, which will significantly improve train speeds and service reliability on the slow zone-plagued stretch. (The Wilson station project is already funded from state, federal and local sources, and is currently proceeding through a separate Environmental Assessment process.)

**Construction of a Red-Purple bypass.** Construction of a bypass north of the Belmont station to eliminate delays and speed up train service where the Red, Purple and Brown lines currently all intersect. The current configuration requires trains on three of four tracks to stop and wait for Brown Line trains to cross, which results in more than 40 percent of weekday trains being delayed by as much as three minutes. About 150,000 rides travel through this intersection each weekday, all of which are slowed down because trains must stop and wait for signal clearance. The structure's original 1907 design makes it difficult, under present day and service demands, to provide reliable service and makes adding service extremely challenging.

"Modernizing Red Line rail service and stations strengthens our neighborhoods by making transit more reliable and ultimately generating new economic development near revitalized stations," said Ald. Harry Osterman. "We're pleased that Mayor Emanuel and the CTA recognize the importance of safe, reliable transit in neighborhoods near the Red Line, including Andersonville, Edgewater and Uptown, and look forward to working closely with the CTA on this exciting program."

Future phases of RPM will bring the same level of infrastructure and station improvements to the remaining sections of the Red and Purple lines, from north of Belmont station to Linden station in Wilmette.

Estimated cost for the first phase of RPM is \$1.7 billion.

In November 2013, the CTA became the first transit system accepted into the Federal Transit

Administration's (FTA) new Core Capacity Program that provides funding to transit systems to add capacity on existing infrastructure for future ridership growth. The RPM project is eligible for 2014 Core Capacity federal funding approved by Congress earlier this year.

#### About RLE

The 5.3-mile Red Line Extension project will extend south from the 95th Street Terminal through the greater Roseland community. Plans include construction of four new stations near 103rd Street, 111th Street, Michigan Avenue/116th Street and 130th Street, all with bus and parking facilities.

The RLE project will provide rapid transit rail access to a low income, transit-dependent Far South Side area that does not have direct CTA rail service. An extended Red Line will provide up to a 20-minute time savings to downtown by providing one-seat service, as opposed to the current bus-rail trip from 130th Street. It will also improve access to jobs and education, and foster economic development.

In 2011, the CTA received funding from the FTA to conduct the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the RLE project—a major, important step in the multi-step federal process to secure approval and funding of the \$2.3 billion dollar project.

#### Public Input and Next Steps

The CTA will meet with community groups and host public open houses to share details and seek input on the proposed RPM and RLE projects. Members of the public can submit formal comments directly to the CTA or at public open houses where CTA and representatives will provide additional information on RPM and RLE project plans. For each project, CTA is seeking community input on the location, design, and social, economic, and environmental effects of the proposed improvements.

**The Lawrence to Bryn Mawr Modernization Open House** will be held Wednesday, May 21, at Truman Community College, 1145 W. Wilson Ave. from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**The Red-Purple Bypass Open House** will be held Thursday, May 22, at the 19th District Police Station, 850 W. Addison St., from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**The RLE Open House** will be held Tuesday, May 13, at Palmer Park Gymnasium, 201 E. 111th St., between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Comments for either project can also be submitted by email or postal mail to:

RPM@transitchicago.com

RedExtension@transitchicago.com

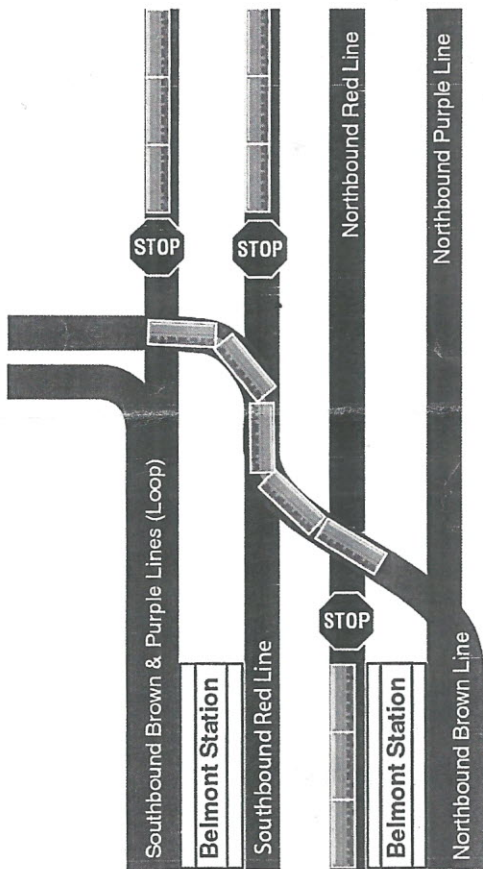
Chicago Transit Authority  
Strategic Planning, 10th floor  
Attn: RPM Project or RLE Project  
567 W. Lake Street  
Chicago, IL 60661-1465



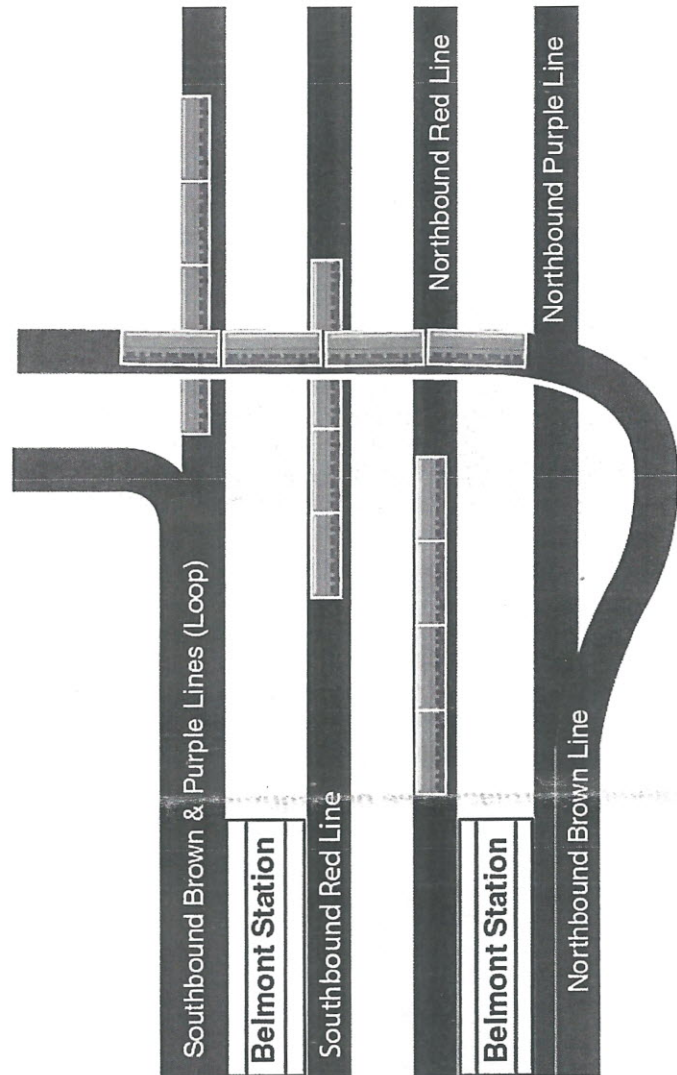
Following public input, the CTA will deliver draft environmental studies for both RPM Phase One and RLE to the FTA as part of the process to request federal funding. Timing for construction starts on each project is dependent upon the receipt of funding for each project. By the beginning of May, the CTA will release a request for Letters of Interest and Qualifications (LIQ) for Preliminary Engineering (PE) services for Phase One of RPM.

For more information about the Red Purple Modernization and Red Line Extension projects, visit [transitchicago.com](http://transitchicago.com).

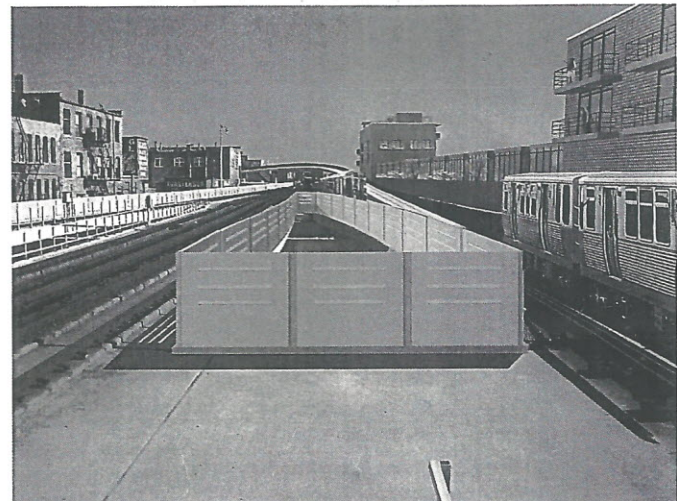
#### Current Red-Purple and Brown Track Intersection Configuration



#### RPM Bypass Track Configuration



#### RPM Bypass Track-Level View Concept





## RPM Bypass Street-Level View Concept



### Reminder: Temporary Suspension of Orange Line Service This Weekend

4/17/2014

**Work begins on the \$25M 18th Street Connector rehabilitation project; free bus shuttle to operate between Halsted and Roosevelt stations**

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) will begin major rehabilitative work this weekend on the elevated Orange Line structure known as the 18th Street Connector, which connects Orange Lines trains to the Loop. To perform this work, train service between the Halsted and Roosevelt Orange Line stations will be temporarily suspended this weekend – the first of five weekend-only service disruptions scheduled through early June.

**Beginning at 10 p.m. on Friday, April 18, until the start of service at 4 a.m. on Monday, April 21,** Orange Line trains will not operate between the Halsted and Roosevelt stations. For customers who need to travel between these two adjacent stations, a free bus shuttle will be provided along with free transfers back into rail stations to resume the remainder of their trips.

The shuttles will run continuously during normal weekend Orange Line service hours and will be able to accommodate all passengers. Customers are strongly encouraged to allow approximately 15 minutes of extra travel time when traveling to/from the Loop via the Orange Line this weekend.

Constructed more than 45 years ago, components of the structure are now beyond their useful life and are in need of replacement or significant repairs. Crews will perform track renewal work (the replacement of worn rail ties and components), which will result in smoother and more reliable service for Orange Line customers. Additional work will include painting and waterproofing

the structure that will mitigate leaking water from the structure, which had created icy conditions in adjacent parking lots and alleyways during the winter months.

Additional weekend-only track closures are scheduled for May 2-4, May 16-19, May 23-26 and May 30-June 2. Work will begin each Friday at 10 p.m. and conclude by 4 a.m. the following Monday. Weekend work will also require partial closures of State Street and/or full or partial closures of 18th Street. Residents and local businesses will receive notice ahead of closures.

The 18th Street Connector project is funded through the Illinois Department of Transportation funds and tax-increment financing (TIF) made available through Mayor Emanuel's Chicago Neighborhoods Now and is part of a larger \$92 million investment in Near South Side transportation options announced by Mayor Emanuel last August. Other investments aimed at revitalizing the area include the construction of the \$50 million Cermak-McCormick Place Green Line station and the rehabilitation of the Roosevelt (\$7 million) and Harrison (\$10 million) stations on the Red Line.

### CTA and Pace to Complete Transition to Ventra by July 1

3/14/2014

**81 percent of CTA customers already use Ventra**

Chicago – The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and Pace today announced the transit systems will complete the transition to the new Ventra fare payment system by July 1.

The transition will fully convert CTA and Pace customers to Ventra, the first fully open contactless fare payment system in North America. Currently, 81 percent of CTA customers and nearly 60 percent of Pace customers are using Ventra, with more than 1.5 million Ventra transit accounts currently active.

The transition calendar has three phases:

**May 1**—Customers can no longer **buy** magnetic stripe cards or **autoload/reload** Chicago Card/Chicago Card Plus

**June 1**—Customers can no longer **reload** magnetic stripe cards or **use** Chicago Card/Chicago Card Plus

**July 1**—Customers can no longer **use** magnetic stripe cards. Pace customers paying with cash will no longer be issued a Transfer Card. All customers will be transitioned to Ventra.

CTA, Pace and Cubic Transportation Systems have made several improvements to the system, from software upgrades to improvements to the Ventra call center. Ventra performance continues to meet the high standards laid out by CTA in November. CTA will continue to monitor this performance closely to ensure Chicagoans have a seamless commute and can rely on a world-class transportation system.



"For the last three months Ventra has performed well overall, and is used by more than one million riders each day," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "We have worked closely with our vendor, Cubic, to increase the reliability and convenience of the system."

"We teamed with CTA and Cubic to create improvements that focus on meeting our customers' expectations," said Pace Executive Director T.J. Ross. "Over the next few months, Pace is carrying out a grassroots campaign to inform our riders about the transition and the favorable benefits of using Ventra."

Chicago Card Plus customers enrolled in the CTA's Transit Benefits through their employers and O'Hare employees using the temporary O'Hare smart card are transitioning the first week of April, and will receive specific instructions through their employers.

To assist customers who still need to transition, Ventra has a number of ways to make the process seamless:

Customers can easily obtain a Ventra Card at vending machines at CTA's 145 rail stations and at more than 1,000 retail locations in Chicago and the suburbs. To take advantage of balance protection in the event of a lost/stolen card and online account management, customers can easily register their cards at [ventrachicago.com](http://ventrachicago.com) and have the one-time card purchase fee of \$5 converted to fare value on their Ventra Card.

Ventra plans a number of balance transfer events throughout the city over the next three months. At these events, customers can transfer balances from valid magnetic-stripe cards and Chicago Cards, obtain and register a new Ventra Card (with no upfront purchase fee), and have their questions answered. These events will also assist customers who have been issued Reduced Fare and Ride Free Permits by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA).

Balance transfer customers may bring a maximum of five eligible fare media cards with a combined minimum of \$5 in transit value. Fare media that is eligible for balance transfers includes CTA and Pace stored value magnetic stripe full-fare and reduced-fare cards and Chicago Cards. Unlimited ride 1-day, 3-day, 7-day and 30-day passes, reduced fare passes, and passes sold in bulk or any expired fare media cannot be transferred to Ventra cards and must be used up. RTA reduced-fare permit holders must bring in new Ventra RTA reduced-fare permit for balance transfer.

Pace will announce a series of Ventra Card distribution events to be held at transit centers and key suburban transfer locations at which customers can receive a free Ventra Card (with in-person registration) and have their questions answered.

Ventra staff will also be deployed at several rail stations on dates to be announced to answer questions and help customers transition to Ventra.

Chicago Card Plus customers who have not yet transitioned to Ventra will be able to do so conveniently

online at [ventrachicago.com](http://ventrachicago.com). Early next week Chicago Card Plus customers who purchase a Ventra Card from a vending machine or retailer will be able to transfer their Chicago Card Plus balance online after registering their new card. (This excludes Transit Benefits customers, who will receive instructions through their employers on how to transition to Ventra if they have not yet done so.)

Later this spring, customers who wish to transfer unused balances on Chicago Card and magnetic stripe fare cards will have the option of mailing in their old cards and having any unused balance transferred to their registered Ventra Card. This will exclude unlimited-ride 1-day, 3-day, 7-day and 30-day pass products, which must be used up in advance of the full transition. The CTA will provide more details about the mail-in option later this spring.

Customers can visit [ventrachicago.com](http://ventrachicago.com) for complete balance transfer rules and event dates, how-to-videos and frequently asked questions.

## **CTA Announces New Rail Operator Scheduling Rules**

4/4/2014

### ***Internal review of scheduling policies following March 24th O'Hare incident lead to changes to maximize passenger and employee safety***

The Chicago Transit Authority today announced changes in the scheduling of rail operators, the result of a comprehensive internal agency review of scheduling procedures following the March 24, 2014 incident at the O'Hare Blue Line station.

The CTA has historically followed well-established scheduling principles and practices that are very similar to those of every other transit agency in the country. However, the CTA voluntarily and immediately began conducting an internal analysis of those policies to determine if improvements could be made.

"Safety is our highest priority at the CTA," said CTA President Forrest Claypool. "Any time an incident like this occurs, we take very seriously the responsibility of thoroughly reviewing all aspects of what happened -- including longstanding policies and practices. In this instance, there were changes we could make that are appropriate and that further maximize safety for our customers and for our employees."

Among the proposed changes:

Setting a maximum of 12 hours of actual train-operations duty (including layover times at terminals and other non-driving rail duties) for rail operations employees in a 14-hour time period. Currently, there is no maximum.

Increasing the minimum time of rest between shifts to 10 hours from eight hours.

Require all rail operations employees to take at least one day off in any seven-day period. Currently, there is no limit.



For new operators in the first year of operating a train, limit weekly hours operating a train to 32 hours. As they do now, these employees will work other rail-related duties besides operating trains in their other work hours. Currently, there is no limit.

These changes will make CTA scheduling guidelines as stringent, and in most cases more stringent, than its peer transit agencies nationwide.

The CTA has already implemented two other changes at the O'Hare Blue Line station: reducing the speed limit of approaching trains to 15 mph from 25 mph, and moving "trip arms," devices that will stop a train traveling above the speed limit, further back from the end of the platform. Additionally, the CTA will repeat its fatigue awareness training for all rail operators.

The CTA continues to work with the National Transportation Safety Board in its investigation into the March 24 incident.

## **Picking Up Planning Pace In Niles**

### ***Milwaukee ART Set For 2016, Pace Holds Public Free Bus Study Workshop***

Posted: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 11:03 am | Updated: 1:21 pm, Wed Mar 26, 2014.

Staffers from the Pace Suburban Bus System joined about 15 Niles residents at the park district's Oasis Fun Center last week as part of an ongoing study of the Niles Free Bus system.

Pace officials' goals in studying the Niles Free Bus system are two fold.

Pace expects to bring its arterial rapid transit (ART) bus service on line in 2016.

The first Pace bus route that will see the new service is the Rte. 270 Milwaukee Avenue line running from the Jefferson Park CTA Metra station in Chicago to Golf Mill in Niles.

ART bus routes will have special shelters set so buses would no longer need to kneel boarding passengers making embarking and debarking faster.

ART buses would have 10 stations set up starting at Jefferson Park and moving northwest with stops at Central Avenue, Austin and Ardmore avenues, Haft and Highland avenues, Touhy Avenue, Harlem Avenue and Howard Street, Oakton Street and Oak Mill Mall, Main Street, Dempster Street and Golf Mill.

Pace sees the Niles Free Bus as a circulator for the ART that would transport people to those ART stops.

Additional routes along Dempster Street, Golf Road and Harlem Avenue are also planned for later rollouts.

The Niles Free Bus Rte. 411 is by far the most popular and well-used bus in the village.

The 412-bus route uses fewer buses and has fewer riders overall, but for the number of riders using the service per hour, is the most productive route.

The 413-bus route is the least productive with the fewest passengers overall, Pace officials at the meeting said.

Pace spokesman Patrick Wilmot said the main themes voiced in surveys given to those at the meeting was a desire for extended free bus hours, service to the plaza at Harlem and Dempster, extra service on Sundays to churches and to special events.

Several Niles bus drivers attended the event. Riders voiced their appreciation for those village employees' high levels of service at the meeting.

Residents did express some concern about differentiating Niles Free Buses from regular Pace buses that might stop at some of the same places.

New buses coming on line will be the same color blue as the Niles Free Bus is now as is the regular Pace Harlem Avenue bus.

Concerns were raised about snow removal in ART bus stations during winter months.

Pace Senior Planner Charlotte O'Donnell said an auto snow melting system currently used in a handful of communities such as Vail, CO, is under consideration with a cost benefit analysis ongoing.

One retired Niles transportation employee asked where the money to pay for such significant infrastructure was coming from.

O'Donnell said grants had already been secured by Pace to pay to see the ART program implemented.

Having the Niles Free Bus system buses go beyond village borders to serve nearby Metra stations in Morton Grove and Edgebrook were also "on the list" of possible changes to the Niles Free Bus system.

Pace planners at the meeting said part of their consideration on changing routes includes discussions with major employers such as Shure that maintains its global headquarters on Touhy Avenue.

Pace officials at the meeting said there are major employers, such as UPS that has major hubs in nearby Northbrook that Pace serves with a 3 a.m. bus for shift changes.

## **Houston METRO orders 95 MCI® Commuter Coaches to update, expand express service**

**DES PLAINES, IL — March 26, 2014** — Motor Coach Industries (MCI) has been awarded a contract by Houston METRO for 95 MCI Commuter Coaches, with options for additional units. The new coaches will be equipped with the newest EPA-mandated clean-diesel engine technology.





Serving a growing express service that picks up from Park & Ride locations and operates in HOV lanes, Houston METRO's new coaches will replace older equipment and allow for the expansion of its commuter express services. Deliveries of the new MCI Commuter Coaches are expected to begin in the summer of 2014.

"We're extremely honored that Houston METRO has once again selected the MCI Commuter Coach for its express services," said Tom Wagner, MCI Vice President Public Sector sales. "Metro is dedicated to providing ridership with exceptional service, and we believe the MCI Commuter Coach helps it achieve that mission."

The MCI Commuter Coach, which is Buy America-compliant and Altoona-tested, is specifically designed for express service and highway speeds, offering a rugged semi-monocoque structure that elevates passengers and drivers above traffic, plus Electronic Stability Control (ESC), tire pressure monitoring and a fire suppression system. METRO's coaches will be equipped with wheelchair lifts; 55 forward-facing seats with individual overhead LED reading lights and airflow controls; and parcel racks.

MCI is the first intercity coach manufacturer to offer an over-the-road intercity coach in diesel-electric hybrid as well as CNG to public transit agencies.

Since 2001, Houston METRO has purchased 286 MCI Commuter Coaches, including 122 diesel-electric hybrid MCI Commuter Coaches.

Houston METRO operates an integrated transit system that includes light rail transit, Bus Rapid Transit, Commuter Rail Transit and 25 Park & Ride lots.

## North Dakota Farmers Union gets rolling with new MCI® J4500

**DES PLAINES, IL — March 31, 2014** — Most motor coach operators run sightseeing trips and tours because it's their business. The North Dakota Farmers Union uses its tours to offset the costs of sending children to camp. And this year, both union sightseers and youth campers will be riding in style aboard a new MCI J4500, delivered February 18.



The new MCI J4500, which replaces an older coach of the same model, features an upgraded media package with both 110-volt outlets and USB ports at every seat, plus plug-ins that allow laptop presentations to be projected on the coach's video screens. The coach was additionally delivered with three-point seatbelts, cup holders and an extra elegant touch — wood veneer flooring and accents that greet passengers as they ascend the signature MCI spiral entryway.

"The wood veneer adds a nice, welcoming feeling, and the people who have been aboard really like it," said Jeff Willer, Transportation Director for the North Dakota Farmers Union and also its lead driver. "We've always had nice coaches for our members, but this one ups the ante."

Willer says he has also begun to notice the improved fuel efficiency of the 2014 model, which is equipped with a Cummins engine and Allison transmission. He says he expects it to get even better once the engine is fully broken in. Also, he says, "The ride is better, and it's a nice, quiet coach inside." The model underwent a significant redesign in 2013, gaining new LED headlamps, a slightly taller look and other improvements. In addition to the more fuel-efficient, clean-diesel engine, the 2014 model also features MCI's MDSS suspension system and standard safety features including electronic stability control, tire-pressure monitoring and a fire-suppression system.

The Farmers Union will be keeping its J4500 busy. So far, it's been to New Mexico and Minnesota, and its schedule is filling up. One of its most popular trips is a sightseeing excursion to the state's oil fields, which drew 1,100 people last year alone. Also popular are educational trips to fertilizer plants, crop sites and other places of interest to the farmers and insurance people who make up the bulk of the membership. The coach is also used for multi-day vacation trips. All of its paid trips help offset the costs of its summer camp program that serves members' children and other eligible youth.

Based in Jamestown, the North Dakota Farmers Union, which Willer says is the last state farmers union with a bus program, has owned its own buses since 1947 and has been buying MCIs for almost as long.



## Family-owned Klein Transportation moves generations, adds new MCI® J4500 coach

**DES PLAINES, IL — April 7, 2014** — When John Klein started transporting the children of Daniel Boone School District in 1957, little did he know he was starting a business that would open the doors for new travel opportunities for his community — for generations. Over time, Klein Transportation has branched out. The school buses still serve the children of Daniel Boone, and the motor coach division transports countless tour and charter customers to shows, business events, area casinos and vacation destinations.

Whether clients are strolling the boardwalk in Atlantic City, sampling the wines of the Finger Lakes, discovering the delights of New England, or booking a cruise to a tropical paradise, most would agree that Klein Transportation is what family-run companies are all about — hands-on service, with a commitment to providing passenger satisfaction and ultimate value.

President Wayne Klein, representing a third generation to lead the company, helped start the motor coach side of the business in 1979 with two used coaches. After growing up in the business when it was run by his parents, William and Mary Klein, he found the move into tour and charter work a natural extension.



Early tours were organized by Mary Klein and included many family members and friends. By 1982, business had increased enough for Klein to purchase its first new coach, an MCI® MC-9. Today, the fleet includes 15 modern MCI coaches, the most recent a 2014 MCI J4500 delivered in December. Of course, today's coaches have undergone more than a few improvements since those first buses. Klein's newest MCI J4500 features an elegant spiral entryway, plush tiered seating, and onboard video monitors, along with 110-volt outlets for passengers' personal electronic devices. Portable Wi-Fi completes the connectivity picture.

Says Wayne Klein of the J4500, which was redesigned by manufacturer MCI a year ago, "Customers love it. It's got great curb appeal. It's really a nice, fresh, modern update."

The new coach also features a clean-diesel powertrain for nearly zero emissions to protect the environment, and it offers surprisingly good fuel economy for a 45-foot-long vehicle loaded with safety equipment.

Safety is something Klein takes very seriously. In addition to choosing equipment that protects passengers with features such as fire-suppression systems, tire monitoring and stability control, Klein performs nearly all of its own maintenance work at its own garage, contributing to the company's excellent inspection ratings. And Klein is happy for passengers to know those ratings.

"Our customer base has become much more sophisticated over the years," says Klein. We educate our customers on how to use the Internet to research company safety ratings. Our rating is one we're very proud of, and we always want to make sure our customers are comparing apples to apples when they're looking for a coach company."

That kind of concern for customers' well-being extends to treating its staff well, too. Klein counts among its 70 or so employees many who have been with the company for decades. Wayne Klein points to his Aunt Maryln as well as longtime General Manager Barb Dlugolecki, who has been with the company since 1986. Many coach drivers have been with Klein for more than 25 years, and a couple of school bus drivers have been with the company for 40-plus years.

Wayne Klein's brother, David, was involved in the early years, though he left the company to start another business. Wayne's wife, Adele, worked closely with Mary in developing the tour division and is dedicated to sales and marketing.

Furthermore, there's a new generation of Kleins waiting in the wings. Daughter Alison contributes to the business from home while raising three children; son Andrew, a graphic designer, also raising three children, created the look of the coach exteriors and the company's website.

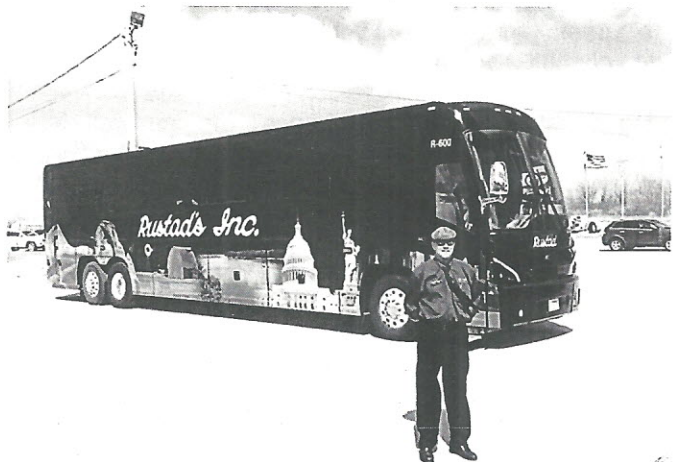
Wayne Klein is proud of the legacy and hopeful for the future. "There aren't many bus companies around here that are still run by the companies that founded them," says Klein. "We're the only ones where our name is on the bus, and we're still running it. This will be our 35th year in the motor coach business, and we're proud to be a family-owned company."

## Rustad Bus Service combines small-town service, big-time amenities with decked-out MCI® J4500

**DES PLAINES, IL — April 10, 2014** — With only a population of only 780, Kerkhoven, Minnesota, may be small, but its hometown bus service is big on luxury — as evidenced by its most recent purchase, a new MCI J4500 that can only be described as "loaded." Rustad Bus Service, which operates Rustad Tours, opted for tan leather seats, cup-holders, woodgrain flooring, flat-screen video monitors, 110-volt outlets at each seat and



Wi-Fi connectivity for its new J4500. The coach also comes equipped with a Cummins engine, an Allison transmission, Michelin tires and an array of safety features.



"It's a fantastic coach," said Charles (Chuck) Rustad, who, in leading the company his father founded, has purchased 11 new and many more pre-owned MCI coaches over the course of his career. "This one has everything beat," said Rustad.

Customers approve, too. Rustad held an open-house and coach unveiling in February that drew more than 100 customers despite a significant snow storm. The coach then made its maiden journey: a 30-day group tour to Arizona and Las Vegas. Upon its return, the J4500 headed out again on a trip to Washington, DC. It's not surprising that the new J4500 and the rest of Rustad's coaches are constantly on the go. Most Rustad tours sell out.

"Our tours are hand-made," said Rustad. "We have a lot of repeat tours and always add new ones. Our tours are set up for a rural clientele, but we're getting more people from the Metro area."

Pampering may be behind Rustad's success. Passengers leave their cars parked overnight indoors at Rustad's 14,800-square-foot garage and service shop. Chuck Rustad attributes the perk to his wife, Jean, who helps run the business. Earlier, the Rustads' three now-grown children would wash the cars. "My wife wanted them to have a good work ethic," said Rustad. Married for over 30 years, Rustad met his wife when he was in the seventh grade. "We grew up together and fell in love. She's been the keystone of the business," said Rustad, who fondly recalls a time when he taught his wife, by phone, how to change condenser brushes. "We might be the last little family business around. We do it all: wash, clean and drive."

The company started in January 1947, when brothers George and Herb Rustad bought three school-bus routes to serve the Kerkhoven School District. In the 1950s, they expanded to 11 routes and gained authority to transport adults within Minnesota.

In the 1960s, the brothers bought their first coach-style bus — and their first MCI. When the 1970s rolled around, they began running longer charter trips outside of Minnesota. In 1977, Herb sold his share of the business to George, who, with his son, Chuck, started Rustad Tours.

Today Rustad Tours serves customers from roughly a 125-mile radius with a fleet that also includes three high-end MCI E4500 coaches. Its tours cover 50 states and nine Canadian Provinces.

## Northfield Lines Adds CX45 to Fleet

"Since 1989 the motorcoach travel industry has taught me that this is, through and through, a people business," says Northfield Lines President, John Benjamin. "Just after college, my late brother Larry took over a failing restaurant and made it a resounding success. He recognized that quality service and building relationships with customers is key to doing well in any business. He also figured out that driving a school bus run for a local bus company fit neatly with his schedule as a restaurateur and when the owner of the bus company retired, he bought the business, nicely combining the two skill sets."

John Benjamin was enjoying a career as an electrical engineer when Larry prevailed upon him to join Northfield Lines. Engineering's analytical thought process turned out to be ideal for running operations and designing routes.



"Over the years we expanded the company dramatically, but have worked hard at remembering where we came from. We work hard at relationships with customers. Our sales staff meets weekly to discuss how to better serve clients. We genuinely care about our customers, but even a good marriage needs fine tuning. We look for new ways to show them that they are our number one priority."

ABC's Account Manager John McFarlane points out, "At a time when it is increasingly difficult for operators to meet industry demands, they manage to excel at school and college transportation, corporate work, as well as scheduled service, charters, and convention support. Many operators are successful providing some of these services, but Northfield is unique in their ability to



provide them all."

Part of quality service is providing great equipment, and to that end, Northfield Lines ([www.northfieldlines.com](http://www.northfieldlines.com)) recently took delivery of a new luxury motorcoach from ABC Companies, Van Hool's exclusive US distributor. The 2014 ADA equipped CX45 is powered by a Detroit DD13 engine coupled to an Allison B500G5 transmission. The 56 passenger coach comes with Van Hool's standard safety features including Kidde fire suppression, Smartwave tire monitoring, automatic traction control, lane departure warning, back-up camera and is UN ECE-RU66 rollover certified.

Reflecting Northfield's commitment to passenger comfort, the coach is equipped with a wood grain floor, 110 volt outlets, WiFi, enclosed parcel racks and REI's elite entertainment system with 6 large video monitors, magazine nets, cup holders, Alcoa Dura Bright aluminum wheels, window shades and Van Hool's unique rear passenger window.

"When my brother Larry died in 2011, ABC, particularly John McFarlane and Brenda Borwege, stepped up and helped us raise \$150,000 for lung cancer research for A Breath of Hope Foundation. A Breath of Hope ([www.abreathofhope.org](http://www.abreathofhope.org)) is a leader in the effort to find a cure for lung cancer by focusing on disease awareness, early detection and treatment. The majority of lung cancer is in non-smokers like Larry and it's critical to get that message out."

McFarlane pointed out, "Northfield has won a number of awards for excellence, in part because they provide their community with a variety of services performed with a superior level of customer satisfaction. They demonstrate that it's possible for a relatively small operator to be remarkably diverse, at a time in history when that's critical for a business. The awards have come, not just as a result of their services, but because this family-run business has been deeply involved in the industry, as well as their community. Their contribution of expertise and energy has benefited IMG, UMA, and the Minnesota School Bus Operators Association."

"In February, 2011, they were named 'Business People of the Year' by the Northfield Chamber of Commerce, in recognition of their involvement in the community and recently won the 2014 UMA Vision award for small companies."

And McFarlane smiles, "John and Wanda Benjamin are two of the nicest people you ever want to deal with in business and in life in general. It's a pleasure working with Northfield Lines."

## **Air Bear Adds Four New Van Hool's to their Fleet**

Shelli France didn't know what she was getting into when she started working at Air Bear Travel as a co-op student in 1985.



Thirty years later, she and her husband Paul not only own the Cheboygan, Michigan, based full-service travel agency, they have transformed it into a comprehensive company that offers a complete range of transportation options while maintaining a reputation for superior quality. From 1999 until present, they have been named "People's Choice" for favorite travel agency in Cheboygan, Emmet and Presque Isle (Michigan) counties.

Paul pointed out that within a year of their purchasing Air Bear in 1994, airlines began capping commissions, limiting agents ability to prosper. As part of an effort to expand and diversify the business, the Frances bought a local limousine company - then shuttle buses to handle casino work - and began running their own tours.

"By 1997 we figured out that by owning our own coaches we could improve and control the quality of our customers' experience. We got a 40' Van Hool from ABC, and it worked out so well that it became apparent that we needed more capacity," he said. "I called Pete Bachrach, our ABC Account Manager and within an hour he and Roman Cornell were on the phone, had located a T2145 coach, and suddenly we were operating new coaches." In 1999 Air Bear purchased land, and built their own bus barn and office complex.

The fleet eventually grew to four motorcoaches, and in addition to the traditional services provided by the travel agency, Air Bear now offers charter service, casino trips and motorcoach tours throughout the US and Canada.

"When we began operating our own coaches, we discovered a new opportunity. As we learned how to provide Air Bear's tour customers with the most professional drivers, finest coaches and first rate customer service, we realized that we had something special to offer other tour companies," says Paul. "We now provide other agencies the motorcoach component of their tours. Our roots are in the tour business, so we understand their unique needs."



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We can help them 'up' the ground part of their game."

Air Bear has recently completely renewed their motorcoach fleet by acquiring four 2014 coaches, as well as a refurbished T2145 Van Hool, increasing the fleet size to five units.

The new coach acquisition consists of two Van Hool TX45's and two CX's which are driven by DD13 engines coupled to Allison B500G5 transmissions. All four are equipped with REI Elite Entertainment systems, Smart Wave Tire Monitoring Systems, Lane Departure Warning, 110 volt outlets and ASA WiFi, Alcoa Durabrite wheels, enclosed parcel racks, card tables and passenger seat belts. In addition the 56 passenger TX45's boast Van Hool's Body Line seats with footrests and leatherette piping, Hella DynaView Evo2 Static Cornering lights, backup camera and Kidde Fire suppression systems.

ABC Senior Account Manager Pete Bachrach says, "These coaches are a demonstration of Air Bear's commitment to providing their customers high-end coaches to go with the award winning service they are known for. All of us at ABC enjoy serving the France's - they expect the same quality of product and support from us that they do from their employees - and that's a high standard to meet. We are very grateful for their business."

According to Paul France, "I challenged Pete as my salesman just as I would our staff - be the best, Pete, and ABC answered the call, met that challenge and made it all come together. We've tried other brands and come to the conclusion that ABC and Van Hool offer Air Bear the best coach and support available. When we took delivery, on the return trip to Michigan the TX45 handled exceptionally well. We experienced wind, rain, snow and cold weather. The TX performed beyond our expectations."