

Transport Central

VOLUME TWO, NUMBER ELEVEN

MARCH 8, 1968

Interurban

SO NOW IT'S THE AIR TAXI -- More than any other single factor, the air taxi has caused the recent decline in RPO's, states an article in Postal Life (March-April 1968), the Post Office Department's official magazine. In fact, the article continues, if the present experiments with air taxi mail service go on satisfactorily, the remaining RPO's will be replaced in 1969 by more air taxi service, and a new one-class letter service will replace the dual 6¢ - 10¢ first class - air mail arrangement currently in effect. Statistically, the article reports that as recently as January 1, 1967, there were 602 RPO cars in service, a figure that dwindled to 135 operating over 46 routes as of January 1, 1968.

WE TOLD YOU SO -- The train-off news picked up again this week as expected. Some old stuff includes UP #5-6 and 17-18 consolidated between Cheyenne-Green River, Wyoming; Southern #41-42 and 29-38 consolidated Washington-Monroe, Virginia; and Norfolk & Western's City of Kansas City, #203-212 St. Louis-Kansas City, off late in January....That "new" CB&Q PM Twin City Zephyr, #23, begins a Friday/Sunday 6 month experiment on March 8, leaving Chicago at 4:55 PM....Last runs of L&N #17-18, Cincinnati-Atlanta and Milwaukee Road #9-10/Soo Line #48-49, the Copper Country Limited (Chicago to Calumet, Michigan) were made March 7....The Interstate Commerce Commission will investigate those MoPac/T&P trains (T/C - March 1, 1968).... and the new petitions include Illinois Central #205-208, Vicksburg-Shreveport, effective March 30; Seaboard #53-54, Florence, S.C. - Augusta, effective March 23; and B&O 51-52, Washington-Cumberland, Maryland, effective March 25.

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERS LIVE ON -- Apparently thieves never retire, or learn that crime does not pay. The proof of the pudding presents itself in one Willie Newton, age 76. Willie was caught in the act of knocking over a bank in Rowena, Texas, though his twin brother, Willis, got away at least temporarily. And who are the Newtons? None other than two members of a 7 man gang (which included two other Newtons as well) found guilty of robbing a Milwaukee Road train near Rondout, Illinois, of a cool \$2 million in 1924. It was later established that the heist was planned by one William Fahey, a postal inspector who was initially detailed to locate the villains.

SMALL PRINT -- B&O/C&O, the "We Like Passengers" people (T/C - 8/15/67 et seq.), continue to adjust equipment on their remaining trains: "Chessie Taverns" are now on the George Washington, "Iron Horse Taverns" (snack/beverage service) are now in the Strata-Dome coaches on the Capitol Limited, and a buffet-coach now provides meal service on the Cincinnatian....MoPac has discontinued that "new" sleeper St. Louis-Little Rock (T/C - 12/1/67).... The Georgian is no more (T/C - 2/2/68); L&N's portion is now known as #3-4 only, with coaches-only Evansville-Atlanta....A VistaDome chair car is back on D&RGW's Yampa Valley....Penn-Central appears in the March Railway Guide for the first time, including a map dated January 1968 (hmmm!)....and those rail diesel cars that the National Railways of Mexico received a year ago are now appearing in the schedules, including Nuevo Laredo-Monterrey, and Ciudad Juarez-Chihuahua....A single unit dining car will replace a twin unit on IC's Panama Limited (Chicago-New Orleans) effective March 15. The single unit, with kitchen and dining facilities in the same car, will seat 48, as against 56 in the double unit, with kitchen and dining facilities in separate cars. Other amenities, including menu, will remain unchanged.

A PASSEL OF PLEADINGS -- Trans World Airlines has asked the Civil Aeronautics Board for immediate authority to operate across the Pacific, and thus around the world. TWA urged that it be allowed to operate one flight each day between California and the Orient, filling the gap in an all-but-around-the-world system that the carrier currently services. TWA is one of the many domestic lines presently seeking transpacific rights, and it asked for the new route in an effort to help improve the U.S. balance-of-payments position....Another party to the lengthy rights proceedings, Continental, asked for similar authority to provide daily service between Honolulu and the Far East. Continental also asked an OK for daily service between Guam and Saipan to the Far East either directly or by way of its newly-granted Guam-Okinawa-Trust Territory service (T/C - 1/12/68).

JET JOTTINGS -- Eastern Air Lines has asked the CAB to remove restrictions that prevent it from improving service between Minneapolis-St. Paul and Milwaukee and cities in the Southeast....On March 6, United Air Lines began Super DC-8 service from Chicago direct to Hawaii....April 1 will see SAS begin new weekly service from Chicago to Bergen, Norway....BOAC VC10 Chicago-London flights have been increased from four to six each week, effective March 3, and the service will operate daily beginning April 6.... United has canceled some domestic cargo and passenger flights because of diversion of jet aircraft to military charter work....On April 28, TWA, Braniff, Northwest, Lake Central, Allegheny, Ozark and Eastern will begin using Midway Airport on Chicago's south side. United resumed operations there in December, and American moved back February 2....Braniff has announced that anytime its planes are more than 15 minutes late on arrival, it will present each passenger with a "Fastbuck" worth \$1.

Urban/Suburban

BUFFALOING BUS BRIGANDS -- An automatic bus monitoring system, to be the first in the world, will be installed experimentally in 500 Chicago Transit Authority buses. The system, aided by a \$1.5 million HUD grant, will enable drivers to contact CTA dispatchers in the Merchandise Mart in the event of a robbery or other emergency, and, through the use of a computer system, the exact location of the bus can be immediately pinpointed. During the 4 year test period, all owl runs will be operated with equipment containing the devices, and when assistance is needed, the driver will be able to unobtrusively activate a switch that will transmit an alarm signal to the Mart. A period of two years will be required to install the equipment, and another two year period will be required to try it out. The use of such electronic equipment was first suggested by CTA chairman George DeMent after the wave of violence that swept the rapid transit and surface systems late last summer (T/C - 9/1/67 et seq. and 1/12/68).

SEAT STORY -- Nearly all suburban commuters on the Illinois Central electric now have seats as a result of a major train shift which added eight additional cars and 675 seats to the line's service. Only one train, the 7:06 AM trip from Richton Park to the Loop will not have enough seats for all riders, but the railroad hopes that some commuters can adjust their schedules to ride other runs and alleviate crowding. There will also be standees on some evening rush hour trips, despite the addition of more than 600 seats and eight cars in PM service, but additional equipment may be added later in the year to offset this crush. These service improvements came in the wake of an Illinois Commerce Commission decision to require the railroad to upgrade its passenger service (T/C - 3/1/68).

FAST FACTS -- DSR raised Detroit city fares from 25¢ to 30¢ March 2....A fare increase from 15¢ to 25¢ is planned for the city-owned system in the Missouri city of Springfield....This is the March 8 issue; last week's was inadvertently pre-dated. Sorry about that.