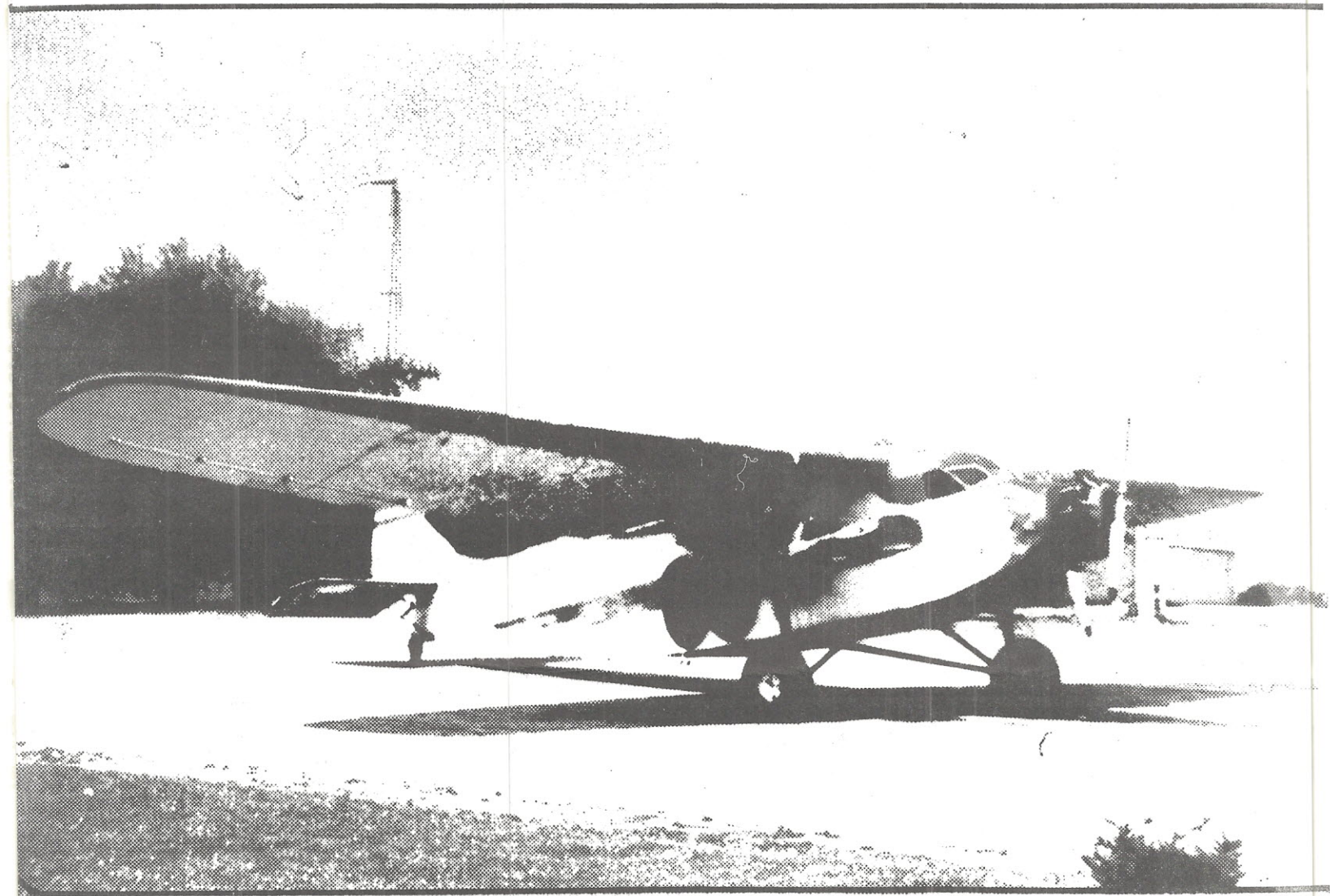


Transport Central



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AN OPEN LETTER TO GEORGE DE MENT

Sir:

In my Republican youth, I was appalled by most of the criticism directed at the Chicago Transit Authority, particularly in the press. I felt it unfair of reporters unfamiliar with the Authority's operations and problems to criticize and even vilify an organization that was trying its utmost to make the best of a difficult situation. The letters to the editor airing this or that real or imagined grievance I dismissed out of hand as being largely the work of cranks who would have been dissatisfied with even the best of situations. Many times, I rose to the defense of the Authority when confronted with a seemingly unjust outburst against it from a friend or co-worker.

But now, after some twenty years of studying its operations, I must confess to a growing realization that perhaps I was wrong in my unwavering support. I have been exposed to an increasing body of reasoned censure of the agency with which I must wholeheartedly concur, in part prompted by the Authority's current (and predictable) plans to once again raise its rates of fare.

Those twenty years of observation have led me to certain inescapable conclusions, in the light of the increasing barrage of criticism of the agency in recent weeks, and some of them are particularly disquieting. The Chicago Transit Authority is senior to many, if not most, of the similar public bodies in this country, and in the more than twenty-two years of its existence has become, in its own initiative, an increasingly calcified agency. While it is indeed a fact that Chicago has been the innovator in pioneering rapid transit concepts in the United States, the bulk of the creative work on those concepts has come from outside the agency. Credit for expanding the design of an expressway to include a median strip rapid transit rail line must go to the city of Chicago, for example, and the highly-successful Skokie Swift project was largely initiated by the Village of Skokie. The Authority's function has been more directed toward reacting to its environment rather than shaping it.

Since as a practical matter there is little to be gained in the way of spoils from the Authority, it has been largely ignored by the professional politicians, except in those minor instances where a little hay might be made among their constituents by attacking it or demanding some special favor, particularly in the ever-present election year. Thus, it follows that the agency is largely ignored in its demands of the politicians, for it has little if anything to offer in return. It is precisely this standoff that has created a sort of defeatist attitude within its councils, a basic belief that the Authority is impotent and must exist solely on the sufferance of the Establishment. This mental block has retarded the orderly growth of public transit in the metropolitan area and must be removed by the Authority's asserting--nay, demanding--its place as a dominant force in urban society. Unequivocal pressure must be brought to bear upon the Legislature and local governmental bodies for the implementation of the area-wide transit coordination plans that have been languishing for more than two decades; pressure backed up by positive unilateral reaction to undue delay or defeat rather than the time-honored pontifical phrases.

Notwithstanding its inability to expand its services to cover the entire metropolitan area, the Authority has also been remiss in its obligation to restructure its existing system to properly serve the city itself. This is not a matter of merely altering routes here and there, but of breaking from the traditional molds of its three predecessors and properly utilizing vehicles and physical plant. Although a unified local transportation system for Chicago has been a reality for over seventeen years, the bulk of the three carriers' services are still being operated independently, and more or less in competition with each other. Only the recent service revisions in conjunction with the opening of the two expressway median strip lines have made a dent in the pattern of internal competition.

The motor bus is at its best as a feeder vehicle, rather than operating in long-haul service, on as flexible a network of routes as can be economically maintained. In Chicago, it performs a variety of functions, some of them well, some of them poorly, but on a rigid network of routes not much changed from the days of streetcars. Since one of the benefits of conversion from rail to rubber is flexibility of route design, it is difficult to understand why the basic network has remained the same for so long, and the Authority may be faulted for a lack of continuing upgrading of its route pattern to accurately reflect changes in population and commerce and improvements in equipment design. It has been the policy of the Authority to largely effect cuts in service necessitated by declining ridership by decreasing the hours of service, rather than the number of vehicles assigned to the line, often resulting in unnecessarily short headways and few riders on each coach.

In an age where environmental pollution is becoming a major concern, it is surprising to note that the Authority is embarking on a program of replacing its remaining electrically-operated surface vehicles with motor buses. No matter what claims are made for the pollution-lessening qualities of this or that type of motor vehicle over another, the fact still remains that they still emit harmful exhaust gases and particulate matter, while electric coaches do not. We are rapidly reaching the point where any additional air pollution, no matter how small, is endangering civilization's very survival.

And that, sir, is why I cannot support the Authority's proposals to increase its rates of fare, not until some basic changes in its policies and methods are made. Obsolescence in theory and practice have crept into the agency, and the trend must be reversed if a public transportation system for the Chicago metropolitan area is to be preserved. A fare hike should be instituted only as a last resort, and only after these steps have been taken:

- 1) Demands served upon state and local governments for authority and financing necessary to create an effective, coordinated local transportation system, in language the lawmakers can understand,
- 2) A change of outlook to that of an agency responsible for creating a better environment, not merely responding to the existing one.
- 3) Emphasis on pruning non-essential services (and upgrading essential ones) on a continuing basis to maintain a viable, flexible system.

Until the Authority adopts a positive, self-confident and forward-looking posture, I will have to remain critic and activist, working toward the establishment of the transportation system we so desperately need.

RICHARD R. KUNZ

COGENT COMMENT

Just released is the latest in a continuing series of reports summarizing the results of a DOT demonstration grant. Titled "A Systems Analysis of Transit Routes and Schedules", and detailing a new route pattern for D. C. Transit devised by computer and detailing its effects on standards of service and operating costs, the report, by Alan Voorhees & Associates makes many valid points about the present "state of the art" in route and schedule planning:

An often-cited advantage of buses as a transit mode is their ready flexibility, since they are not confined by permanently installed rails or wires. However, there is a reluctance on the part of management to take full advantage of this flexibility in making large-scale route changes. This reluctance often stems in part from a hesitancy to modify long-standing traditional routes, many of which are successors to former streetcar routes. Another reason given is the shortage or absence of a transit planning function resulting, perhaps, from previous economy moves. Yet another is the rescheduling expense, which may be considered to be prohibitively large. Finally, fears have been expressed that the disruption of existing travel habits combined with a poorly-conceived plan might cause further patronage losses.

It seems reasonable, however, to assume that systemwide routing changes would be appropriate in many cases. Certainly the urban area itself has changed substantially in recent years. The downtown area, the essential focal point of most route systems, has generally declined in relative importance as many of its employment and shopping activities have moved outward. What is required is a means of adequately evaluating alternative new route systems in advance of actually implementing one.

To suggest that bus service might be improved at no cost implies the existence of operating inefficiencies. At first glance, this seems unlikely. Since World War 2 there has been a continuous effort to streamline operations and eliminate frills as patronage declined. Yet one area of operations has often remained relatively untouched--the transit routes themselves.

The typical systemwide configuration of routes and schedules may be the one major remaining area of potential operating efficiencies. While transit routes in many cities have remained relatively fixed over the years, transit travel patterns may have changed substantially since the decline of usage began. The urban area itself has changed noticeably. Although transit has become more dependent on the downtown travel market, the total number of trips made to downtown has decreased proportionately as the relocation of jobs within each urban area created diverse patterns of daily travel. It would seem logical that traditional transit routes might now be less efficient for serving today's travel needs.

...The flexibility of modern bus transit service may remain largely mythical if the cost and time involved in scheduling new routes cannot be reduced.

...The efforts of the schedule and planning departments of most transit companies have been directed toward patching schedules--making minor revisions instead of rescheduling routes in their entirety. This patching has mostly involved deleting of trips and making occasional route extensions or contractions. Rarely has a major bus company attempted to completely or even partially reroute an existing system.

...It would appear that it is practical to automate every step of the (route and) schedule-making procedure and to carry out the process in one long train without intervening steps.

(Copies of the report are available through DOT or Alan M. Voorhees Associates, Mc Lean, Virginia 22101)

Newsfront

THE SECOND CITY

Chicago, which was once to be accorded the dubious distinction of having the highest transit fare in the country, once again became a runner-up as the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority snared the honor. KCATA's boost (from 35¢ to half a dollar) went into effect January 18: CTA's hike to the new "plateau" will probably become a fact within the next 60 days. As might be expected, widespread grumbling on the part of riders and the press was evident, coupled with the usual threats of boycotts and other retaliation. One bit of good public relations on behalf of the CTA that curiously did not come from that body itself was to be found in the pages of the arch-conservative Chicago Tribune, not generally regarded as a friend of most public bodies, including the CTA.

Quoth the Tribune, in an editorial appearing January 22:

As usual when the Chicago Transit Authority threatens a fare increase, the Tribune has been receiving many letters of protest. One of the most frequent complaints is that the CTA is in financial trouble because it is paying high salaries to board members and other top brass.

These protests deserve answers.

The governing board of the CTA consists of six members and a chairman, who together are paid \$130,000 annually in salaries. When payments to their pensions are included, the total cost of the board is \$166,400. This amounts to .09 of 1% of the CTA's revenue last year.

The board's salaries and benefits, when added to those of other top level officials of the CTA, reach a total of \$517,913. This is .288 of 1% of the CTA's revenue.

The CTA's total labor costs, including all employees and officials, was \$132,039,354 last year. This total was 73.7% of the gross revenue of \$179,957,525.

It seems plain that even if all the top brass was eliminated, the CTA would continue to have financial difficulties.

Elsewhere on the CTA front, its total of trolley coach routes dropped to nine as the 85 CENTRAL line was converted in the wee hours of January 18. The institution of Exact Fare was given as the reason for the somewhat-premature changeover; the line was to be converted with the inauguration of Kennedy rapid service February 1. The Central route held the distinction of having been the longest continuously operated trolley coach line in North America; service had been unbroken on a 24-hour a day basis since its inauguration June 8, 1930. In its earlier years, the route, with its 45-second rush-hour headways was considered a model of efficient operation (Chicago was a pioneer in utilizing the vehicle) and transit men from around the world came to view it. Notwithstanding its conversion, the crown for continuous operation now goes to another CTA electric route, 77 BELMONT, the west end of which began service with trolley coaches in May 1931 (it was subsequently extended to replace the surface rail line which operated on the eastern portion of the street in 1949). This route is still operating electrically and in fact saw new overhead construction into a loop at the Kennedy rapid Kimball station....A half mile to the north, rush hour service to the Loop on a restricted basis will be maintained on the Addison route as part of a compromise reached with civic groups that had protested its removal when the rapid opens (TC 29 Dec 69). Most Addison service and all Di-versey trips will, however, be bobtailed at Sheridan Road.

METROPOLITAN REPORT

Associate Editor Tom Wicker of the New York Times advocates making Manhattan Island prohibitively expensive to reach by auto, encouraging the use of mass transit facilities and helping to keep the fares down. In a lengthy article syndicated throughout the country, Mr. Wicker suggests that suburbanites indirectly subsidize the city's mass transit system in that manner, because they have as great a stake (or perhaps a larger one) in the survival of the city as those who choose or are forced to live within New York....Peoria City Lines is petitioning for a 10¢ fare hike to 40¢ in an effort to stay afloat....The North Western has completed a \$3,800,000 service center in Chicago, designed primarily to keep its fleet of 275 bi-level commuter coaches in good repair. The line recently took delivery of eight more such units at a cost of \$1½ million....Although buried in actual fact and in the pages of Transport Central, transit service in Lorain and Elyria, Ohio is once again operating, this time with school buses formerly in the 750 unit fleet of New York's Triboro Coach....Contrary to our year-end report, bus service in Madison, Wisconsin has not yet gone municipal, but will do so sometime in February....The Kennedy rapid will definitely open for business February 1; a full report will appear in these pages next issue. Also being inaugurated on the same day is express bus service from Jefferson Park to O'Hare airport, under a DOT grant; the Authority will use its A/C 800-804 and 3240-3244 coaches on the run.

TC is pleased to announce that reader/contributor Ronald DeGraw has been appointed Director of Development of SEPTA's Red Arrow division. Mr. DeGraw will function in the fields of experimental services, improvement projects, ride promotions, planning, advertising and public relations. He has been an urban affairs/transportation writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer for several years, and comes from a family long associated with the Red Arrow and its predecessors.

Transportation Secretary Volpe has unveiled a modification kit for bus diesel engines and exhaust systems that he termed a significant development in pollution, noise and odor reduction. The system, produced by GMC for its New Look "Fishbowl" coaches (post-1959), eliminates smoke, reduces unburned hydrocarbon emissions by 90%, cuts carbon monoxide 30% and reduces nitrous oxides 17%....Hawker-Siddeley of Canada has received an \$11,781,000 contract from TTC to build 76 subway cars.

AIR/LINES

Despite delays caused by a faulty engine that caused the Clipper Young America to be red-lined in favor of a substitute 747, the jumbo jet age dawned January 22 as Pan Am's inaugural flight from Kennedy airport in New York to Heathrow in London departed more than six hours late....HEW Secretary Robert Finch has warned the nation's airlines to speed up installation of anti-pollution devices on their craft or face the possibility of strict legislation ordering them to do so. The carriers had planned to get the job done by 1974; the government is pressing for 1972....The CAB has granted Mohawk authority to provide non-stop Hartford/Springfield-Cleveland service, also permitting Boston-Cleveland service stopping at Hartford....Three airlines have asked the CAB to reinstate a strict two-drink limit for passengers on domestic flights. American, TWA and United also pleaded for a third libation for travelers caught in ground delays for more than 45 minutes....American and Trans-Caribbean have agreed to merge, pending stockholder and CAB approval....Aside to TC's Graphic Consultant: Ralph Nader has charged that small (private) plane manufacturers are turning out "the most lethal form of transportation in the U.S."....The sale of Air West to Howard Hughes will be completed on March 31....Cambrian Airways of Wales, an independent, is purchasing three BAC-111s.

AIRLINE ADDENDA

A Colorado Supreme Court decision has upheld a PUC order giving Vail Airways nonstop authority between Denver and Aspen; the route is in direct competition with Aspen Airways. Aspen is currently flying the route with two DC-3s and an FH-227....That grounded DC-2 in Finland was sold; the Douglas transport was grounded 10 years ago and has been used as a cafeteria since then. Converted to a bomber in 1939, the craft is one of the last of its type in existence....A new airport has been proposed for the San Juan basin in Colorado; the field would serve Durango and Farmington.... An \$11.5 million expansion program is in the works for Denver's Stapleton Field, but no rapid transit to downtown is under consideration.

RAILPAX

The Department of Transportation is urging adoption of a joint government-railroad corporation (tentatively tabbed Railpax) which would (following passage of certain bills already under consideration in Congress) assume ownership of all long-haul passenger equipment; provide joint contributions for the maintenance, rebuilding and purchase of new equipment; designate "megapolis corridors" and certain long-haul routes for permanent retention of passenger service; and provide operating subsidies for retained services that lose money.

CN COMMENT

Canadian National and United Aircraft of Canada, Ltd. are testing one seven-car Turbo train set that has received several modifications including rewiring, added interior insulation to reduce noise, as well as insulation of water pipes and valves to keep them from freezing. The modified train set has made some fairly-long, though low-speed test runs to check the results of the changes necessitated by Canada's extreme winter temperatures. UA is confident enough of the results to modify the four other trains as well immediately. The original construction costs have been far exceeded and UA has renegotiated the lease-purchase option contract with CN, but the agreement will not become effective until CN is satisfied the equipment is completely reliable. UA officials believe full Montreal-Toronto service can begin in the fall of this year.

Meanwhile, CN has reissued its system timetable effective January 7. This issue is to remain in effect until October 25, and contains service reductions both permanent and seasonal. Trains 5-6, the Panorama, Winnipeg-Vancouver, have been completely discontinued; the Super Continental does not exactly pick up the slack during the off-season (3 sleepers and 1 coach from Toronto and Montreal), but separate cross-continent sets from Toronto and Montreal (including 9 sleepers, 3 coaches and 3 meal lounge cars each) will operate this summer. The Toronto-Vancouver run will have the ex-Milwaukee Super Dome cars aboard over their entire run.

The Chaleur, Montreal-Campbellton, N.B., will run only during the summer months and the Ocean, Montreal-Sydney/Halifax has been rerouted via Campbellton, handling the through Gaspé equipment one-way (the Scotian carries it the other way).

Passenger service via Edmunston will now be handled by Railiner RDC's, one round trip connecting with 122-123 to and from Montreal, and another between Edmunston and Moncton. Quebec-Chicoutimi day trains 176-177 will make only a single Saturday NB-Monday SB round trip until tri-weekly service is resumed in the spring. Tempo trains 144-145 are listed as operating on a trial basis only beyond London. The former Port Arthur station is now listed as Thunder Bay North; Fort William is now Thunder Bay. Railiner trains 680-683, Regina-Saskatoon, and 681-682, Saskatoon-

Prince Albert were discontinued. Finally, Cavalier sleeper consists between Montreal and Toronto have been reduced to the point where only one car is assigned on Saturdays; and SkyView lounge cars have been dropped from Rapidos 64-65.

PASSENGER POTPOURRI

The ICC has granted the Milwaukee Road permission to drop the Afternoon Hiawatha, 2-3, Chicago-Minneapolis, following completion of runs January 23. Barring court injunctions, this action will eliminate (in this writer's opinion) one of the four remaining true luxury trains (the others: Super Chief, City of Los Angeles, Silver Meteor) of U.S. rails.

Speaking of court injunctions, remember that our quarterly train-off lists only indicate Commission decisions (in our 10th list last issue we did not indicate "pending" as in past lists--we hope you assumed this). Anyway, IC 105-106, St. Louis-Carbondale; MP 15-16, St. Louis-Kansas City; PC 3-30, New York-St. Louis and 50 (Pittsburgh-Chicago) and 53 (Chicago-New York) continue to operate beyond granted discontinuance notices on various court injunctions based on all kinds of appeals. Since none of these have ever put a train back in operation, we will only report these legal dispositions in the news columns.

Illinois Commerce Commission hearings will begin on February 4 on IC's petition to discontinue 21-22, Governor's Special, Chicago-Springfield...PC will show cause on January 27 why it should not be cited for unauthorized discontinuance of 15-18, Columbus-Cincinnati....The Gulf Wind, 11-12, has been rescheduled to operate between Jacksonville and Flomaton, effective 21 January, on the following schedule: EB, leave Flomaton 11:20 PM, Chattahoochee 6:00 AM, arriving Jacksonville 10:00 AM, WB leave Jacksonville 7:45 PM, Chattahoochee 11:30 PM, arriving Flomaton 4:10 AM....GN's petition of 3-4, 7-8 and rerouting of 27-28 has been voluntarily set back for ICC decision until 2 February, due to Division 3's heavy work backlog....A final windup of Q's abrupt discontinuance of its Omaha-Billings train was receipt of a \$2500 fine for violation of the Interstate Commerce Act for failing to honor contracts (tickets) in full; and final rejection of the Crow Indian tribe's contention that they have the right to ride trains operating through their reservation....The January Railway Guide is down to 870 pages....IC has added a Chicago-Memphis sleeper on the Panama Limited....N&W's Chicago-Decatur train was ordered to run for one year, and the equipment consists of former Wabash buffet-baggage car 650 and a pair of coaches....Western railroads have applied for a general 5% increase in passenger fares and discontinuance of round trip discounts....The Kentucky Railway Commission has allowed Southern to discontinue 3-4, Royal Palm, Cincinnati-Somerset, Ky., effective 1 February....C&NW has petitioned 121, Milwaukee-Green Bay via Manitowoc; 125, Chicago to Milwaukee; and 214, Green Bay to Chicago via Manitowoc for discontinuance 22 February. The railroad will offer connecting Greyhound service (rail tickets honored) to Green Bay via Manitowoc in conjunction with 121 and will extend commuter trains 353/817-360 north from Waukegan to Kenosha.

WELL, THAT'S SHOW BIZ...

An off-Broadway theater, the Sheridan Square Playhouse, is offering a play titled, 'Instructions for the Running of Trains, Etc., on the Erie Railway, to go into Effect January 1, 1862', starring Section Ten, a group of New York University Drama School graduates. If the show bombs they can always auction the script to recover the loss.

ON THE COVER: The venerable Ford Tri-Motor is still with us, some 40 years after it made its debut. Most prominent among its benefactors is Island Airlines, Port Clinton, Ohio. (RRK)