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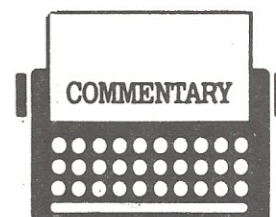
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INTERFACE

Paul Crume's Big D "Regional Transit"

[Every once in a while, a piece of writing crosses this editor's desk that bears reprinting. This particular column is more than sixteen years old, but its point of view is still valid, many years later. Herewith, one of the late Paul Crume's columns from the Dallas Morning News, vintage 1966, as preserved by the Texas ERA Short Circuit Bulletin. — Editor]



Personally, I found the goals for the Dallas report on regional transit highly disappointing. It failed to call for a return of the interurban car.

Thirty or forty years ago we already had regional transit. We just didn't have much to transit. A man could get on an interurban car in Dallas and ride clear to Corsicana by modern electric railroad. No smoke. No cinders. He could ride to Waco or Fort Worth or Denison or just about anywhere we want to go now by regional transit. It was pretty rapid, too, though a little more rapid traveling toward sea level than the other way.

The Oak Cliff High football team would never have thought of traveling to Fort Worth by auto. That might have taken the better part of the day. You could make it easy by interurban in two or three hours if you didn't split a switch.

They say this regional transit was junked because it was unprogressive, and now we're trying to progress right back to it.

To a boy in the country, the sight of one of those interurban cars clucking across the fields was one of the noblest things ever devised by man. The car always looked a little like a runaway buggy that had forgotten to bring its horse.

Up in front, the motorman looked down from his lordly throne. The sliding doors of the baggage compartment were always open on hot days to keep the cars comfortable. Usually a coop of chickens and a couple of cans of cream were in the doorway. Back in the passenger compartment, the cotton-picking hands (the laboring type, not the epithet) would be traveling toward a job—or maybe they were cotton-chopping hands.

People say now that the interurbans were uncomfortable, but the chickens always looked comfortable to me.

In towns, the interurban tracks were often laid right down the middle of Main Street, a very sensible arrangement. People knew that they had regional transit; they didn't have to look it up in the yellow pages. Also, it was very handy for the drummer who had to haul around a bunch of big leather sample boxes, for the interurban would thoughtfully deposit him right at the door of the store. You can't get more regional than that.

It is my understanding (which is not very good in matters like this involving more than \$4.95) that the interurbans went out when the federal government told the electric utility companies

that they couldn't have anything to do with running streetcar and interurban lines. Up until then, we had 7¢ streetcar fares, but the government said this wasn't in the public interest.

I just don't understand it. It seems to me it is a lot better to have a company pay for part of this out of its profits than

to have to do it yourself at the end of the line where the operator might be low on change.

It is all right with me, for instance, if TP&L sells the government all the electricity in the world if we can get lower income taxes.

— PAUL CRUME

AIR



Exit El Al, Enter ?

■ The Israel government, having decided to liquidate El Al, now plans to establish a new national flag airline in "the shortest possible time". El Al was ordered liquidated by the government (which holds 98% of its stock) November 24; Jerusalem must now shoulder the greater burden of El Al's outstanding debts (estimated at about \$400,000,000) as it attempts to give birth to a new carrier.

The new airline (which has not as yet been named) would no doubt have fewer workers; El Al was shot down principally by continuing labor problems, which led to substantial financial losses. In consequence of that, the government would undoubtedly also impose tight controls over the unions that would represent the new carrier's staff.

Rejecting the possibility of selling the existing carrier to private buyers, the government noted that even a new airline would have to be subsidized by Jerusalem to the tune of as much as \$25,000,000 annually. This, contends Industry and Trade Minister Gideon Pratt, is "a reasonable price for a country to have a national airline, but something which a private company couldn't bear."

El Al has been grounded by labor difficulties since September 16, and the Israeli cabinet voted the following month to close the airline, but gave management and labor 21 days to settle their differences before considering its decision final. The deadline having been met without agreement on a new contract, the shareholders declared that years of labor unrest and the inability of staff and management to come to terms had left them with no alternative but to liquidate El Al, which originally took to the skies in 1948. Now the Knesset will officially hand over control of El Al's remains to the courts, which will put the airline into the hands of a receiver for formal liquidation.

Waiting at the Altar

■ Braniff's "innovative 'live-in' agreement" with PSA has apparently gone the way of many domestic "arrangements"—a parting of the ways; this time before the conjugal bed was even warm. PSA Inc., the parent of San Diego-based Pacific Southwest Airlines, officially labeled the proposal

terminated after Dallas-based Braniff failed to meet a November 23 deadline for delivering labor pacts covering the former Braniff staffers to be hired for the joint venture.

Braniff, which is seeing perhaps its last chance at salvation slipping away, blamed the failure to reach an agreement on the Air Line Pilots Association's refusal to accept PSA-mandated provisions limiting the seniority rights of Braniff cockpit workers set to work under the aegis of the California carrier.

Under the terms of the agreement announced in October, Braniff and PSA said that Braniff would supply 25 or 30 jets, 1500 flight crew and ground personnel, a goodly percentage of that carrier's 411 flight slots and the use of various Braniff facilities at domestic airports. PSA would have control of the pricing and marketing of the joint venture which, although technically separate from PSA, would be to all intents and purposes an expansion of the San Diego airline's system. All jets going over to PSA would be painted in that carrier's somewhat-subdued (as compared to Braniff) livery. Thus far, no details have leaked out as to the venture's route structure (PSA is an intra-California carrier), but the "survivor" once noted that the venture would permit it to expand as far east as Texas.

While PSA views the termination as "final", Braniff still has hopes of taking to the skies once again—if it can convince its pilots to come to the bargaining table prepared to accept the carrier's terms. Legal action to abrogate the existing labor contract is also a possibility, in view of Braniff's bankruptcy; the Dallas carrier has already taken its machinist's local to court for similar action.

Braniff, which abruptly ceased operations and filed for bankruptcy in May, has been seeking a way out of its financial difficulties through merger or joint venture since that time with no success; the PSA agreement appeared to be a last desperate attempt to keep going. Without the cooperation of Braniff's unions, however, the carrier stands little chance of resuming any sort of operations. Those labor groups, however, contend that their sacrifices thus far have been enough; the pilot's union, for one, offered to submit the seniority question to binding arbitration, but contends neither airline would even consider such action.

The failure of the two carriers to reach an agreement leaves Braniff in the position of having to accede to its creditors' demands that it liquidate once and for all (it is facing an absolute deadline on that matter next month from the federal court), or possibly divert its energies into non-operating ventures such as providing ground transportation

services. PSA, on the other hand, now plans to pursue a policy of orderly growth, looking at Portland and/or Denver as possible new markets. For the moment, however, the one-time "maverick" carrier (now faced with increasing "budget" airline competition on its principal Los Angeles-San Francisco route) plans to tighten up its operation in order to increase its market share in California.

Looking Backward

■ The Massachusetts Historical Commission, in a survey of aviation within the commonwealth, notes that airports are so familiar these days that it is easy to overlook the fact that some have been operating for over half a century—and are historic sites in their own right.

Early airports survive today in the Springfield, Taunton (the oldest, dating from 1919), Fitchburg, Gardner, Quincy and Marlborough areas (as well as some military fields). Among the first generation landing fields is Logan International, the first section of which was developed in 1923 on the Bird Island Flats in East Boston. Today, only the administration building and the Butler Aviation hangar remain from the original plan; the terminal tower with its handsome sea gull reliefs was torn down only a few years ago.

Perhaps the most interesting early airport now remaining in Massachusetts is Bowles Field in Agawam. Constructed in 1929 as a private project by State Senator Henry Bowles, it was conceived as a modern metropolitan airport with hotel and administration building. Opened with a flourish of publicity, it had a relative short life as an operating field; with the sudden death of Senator Bowles and the impact of the Depression, the airport was converted to a race track in 1935. Nevertheless, the monumental hangar survives to mark the scale of Bowles' plan, with steel truss beams supporting a concrete roof and intricate window details with Art Deco propellers symbolizing the optimism of the early aviation era.

Present plans call for the development of Bowles Field as an industrial park; preservationists hope that some elements of the great hangar can be preserved in local museums.

After World War II, many of the smaller flying fields were sold for the inevitable subdivisions, especially in the Greater Boston area. However, some outlying early fields continue in operation as instructional facilities or private airparks. Two, at Plum Island in Newbury, and Cape Race in Provincetown, still boast original period aircraft on view.

Snob Appeal

■ Comes now yet another airline to the ranks of those sired by deregulation—this one a mite different from the scores of "budget" carriers. First Air is its name; it is based in Los Angeles, and its *raison d'être* is to cater to those jaded travelers for whom first-class air travel is, well, too ordinary.

F. Michael Rogers, a retired Air Force general, is the

guiding light behind First Air. His theory is that people who really know how to travel usually fly on private jets—but private jets are generally too small to be really comfortable on coast-to-coast flights. Enter First Air, which plans to provide the best of all possible worlds for business travelers who have a lot of money.

If First Air wins the necessary nods from the CAB and FAA, it plans to place Boeing 727s in service between New York and Los Angeles—not ordinary 727s, mind you, but specially equipped jets that will carry only 20 people, for a one-way fare of \$1500. The 20 passengers aboard each First Air flight will travel in a combination private club and first-class (pardon the expression) business office. Four private conference rooms will be aboard each First Air plane, along with secretarial service, copying machines, telephones, and the customary stock ticker.

The conference rooms will easily make over into bedrooms for the weary businessman, and the meals will be served in a gourmet restaurant billed as "an equal to the finest in New York, Los Angeles or Chicago". A hairdresser and manicurist will be in attendance, and passengers will be whisked to and from planeside by private limousine. First Air's goal, according to Rogers, is to provide all the luxury of an ocean liner.

On boarding, the feel will be that of a "grand salon", with carpeting and soundproofing equal to that found in the most rarefied corporate domains. The linen and china will be the equal of those associated with the most elegant restaurants.

First Air's market is the one-percent of the population with business on both coasts—show business types and their equals among the corporate barons. For them, according to Rogers, "coast-to-coast trips are no fun. They're a hassle, a lot of time spent hanging around airports and sitting in small seats. Those are the travelers who will want to fly with First Air."

The Crowded Skies

■ United has revised its Chicago-West Coast discount fare structure to include a new SuperSaver tariff of \$289 between the Windy City and most California points. The new fare would entail some restrictions, and be effective from January 6 through March 22. At the same time, the airline will drop its unrestricted Super Coach discount fares for non-stop Chicago-West Coast services.

■ Pan American has jumped into the discount fare fray with a special \$99 one-way fare for travel almost anywhere in the continental U.S.; the new rates will be available December 1 through 15 and January 10 through February 6. From Chicago, the only connection to the Pan Am system is by way of a once-a-day flight to JFK in New York, but the special fare will be valid to Florida points by way of that point.

■ The ever-widening effects of deregulation now include service by Ozark to Brownsville, Texas, bringing to four the number of Lone Star State cities that carrier serves (the others: Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio and Houston).

■ Chicago is one of several cities considered as sites for modern heliports, providing flights in giant choppers to other area jetports and even distant cities. The FAA proposal is part of a plan to invigorate the commercial helicopter industry and to expand air service in congested metropolitan areas.

The study, which also recommends similar fields in Washington (on the roof of Union Station), an unspecified Northern city and along the seacoast, will be completed next year. The experimental heliports would be equipped with instrument landing systems (ILS) for foul-weather service, and would be located where their inherent noise levels would not affect business or residential areas. (A proposed heliport some four blocks from TC's Marina City headquarters opposite the Apparel Mart at the Wolf Point river junction was scuttled last year on such environmental grounds.)

Citing the limitations of concrete runways, the FAA proposal notes that the recent development of commercial helicopters capable of carrying more than 60 persons may make it feasible to set up commercial chopper service between the downtown areas of major cities. Helicopter flight time between Washington and Philadelphia, for example, is less than 45 minutes.

■ Lynn Helms, the Federal Aviation Administrator, has put the city of Chicago on notice that it will not be permitted to permanently close Meigs Field lakefront airport to hold the proposed 1992 World's Fair on that site. Helms

did not rule out a temporary closure for such a purpose, but warned the city that it must restore the site to aviation use after the fair. One of the major selling points of holding the fair on the large lakefront site (the home of the 1933-1934 Century of Progress Exposition) was its later use as a recreational facility.

The city, in agreements signed with the government long before the fair was on the horizon, agreed to keep Meigs operational until at least 1996 in order to obtain the funds with which to develop the airport. Meigs Field, on the lakefront just east of Soldier Field (and about two miles or so from the heart of the Loop) presently caters largely to general aviation, but some commuter airline service is still available. The field handles about 90,000 flights annually, but its proximity to lakefront high-rise buildings has given it an accident rate three times higher than that of a comparable facility.)

■ Muse Air has arranged financing for the purchase of three DC9 Super 80 jets from McDonnell Douglas . . . USAir has purchased five advanced 727-200s from Boeing.

■ More fare cuts: TWA, Eastern and Delta will match at least some of Pan Am's \$99 discount rates in various markets (see earlier story). Another new budget carrier, Arrow Airways, has instituted a \$79 fare on its weekday night flights from Miami to New York (in that direction only). Daytime flights by Arrow on the same route are \$89.

BUS

Along the Open Road

■ North Star Lines has become the first Michigan carrier to completely repay loans from the state DOT for new intercity coaches purchased in 1976 . . . Trailways will soon begin through Chicago-Twin Cities service . . . The long-awaited Bus Regulatory Reform Act of 1982 went into effect November 19, scaling down and simplifying an accumulation of government regulations dating back almost half a century . . . Jefferson Lines, always an innovator in intercity bus travel, has pulled out the rear seats on some of its coaches used on through runs from Minneapolis to points south and replaced them with Pac-Man games . . . The Midwest "Bus Bash" for autumn 1983 will be held at the Munsen's Discovery Coaches garage in Justice, (IL) September 4, following the eastern version at Michaud Trailways in Salem (MA) May 29

■ Wilson Bus Lines of East Templeton (MA) has acquired the last operable Eagle articulated coach . . . Greyhound has streamlined its Wisconsin operations by discontinuing some local routings and services (following intrastate deregulation).

Wisconsin-Michigan Trailways has picked up the former route from Stevens Point through Marshfield, Abbotsford, Park Falls and Ashland to Superior and Duluth, which the 'Hound now bypasses . . . The same Wisconsin carrier now has many of its older coaches up for sale because of recent eries of new MCI units—including the two special 1970 PD-4905 "Cinderella Service" units that formerly operated between Green Bay and Milwaukee until displaced this summer by the advent of pool service to Chicago with Great Lakes Trailways . . . Jacksonville (IL) Bus Line, an old-line carrier once a Trailways system member, has apparently folded its tent; Springfield-based Crown Transit Lines has taken over some of its services.

■ Wisconsin-Michigan Trailways has discontinued its Wausau-Manitowoc-Kewaunee (WI) route, which had been down to one trip weekly in recent years . . . American Trailways of Wisconsin has extended its service from Marshfield to Eau Claire, giving it a through route from Milwaukee to that Wisconsin city.

TRANSIT

SEPTA Squabbles

ITC despaired of ever untangling the twisted tale of Philadelphia SEPTA's wrangling with ConRail and its unions over the Authority's takeover of the railroad's commuter operations in the area that is until the November 1982 issue of RAILPACE magazine reached this desk. In this excellent monthly publication is a regular column, "SEPTA Scene", by Gerry Williams. Following, Mr. Williams' concise assessment of the SEPTA situation. —Ed.]

■ The SEPTA board at its September meeting dissolved its intended partnership with Northeast Commuter Services Corporation, which was to have assumed responsibility for the rail commuter system after ConRail exits the scene January 1. And with this action comes the increasing probability that the system will shut down January 1, for a period of anywhere from several weeks to several months.

SEPTA won a major legal victory in its efforts to remold the commuter operations when a mediator sided with the transit system on several key points in the transition process. The mediator, Francis X. Quinn, was appointed by the National Mediation Board to resolve disputes between SEPTA and the rail unions arising from the changeover. The mediator ruled that SEPTA may advertise all jobs on the commuter system according to SEPTA's own concept of job title, qualifications, duties, tour of duty, days off and wage rates, without prior approval of the unions which now represent ConRail employees whose functions will be transferred to SEPTA. The unions had wanted the jobs to be posted strictly in terms of current job titles and rules, with any modifications thereto to come about only through collective bargaining with the existing unions.

The ruling, which is expected to be adopted as part of ongoing arbitration proceedings under the National Mediation Board, would apparently give SEPTA a free hand to set up train staffing, duty schedules, job classifications, etc., without regard to traditional railroad practices. The decision also appears to give the existing rail unions no assurance that they will have any role to play in the operations after January 1. The lawyer who represented the 13 rail unions involved in the proceedings indicated a possible appeal to the Federal District Court; the appeal to be based on the argument that the mediator overstepped his jurisdiction. Since the Federal courts backed SEPTA in the earlier court actions over SEPTA's assumption of Fox Chase-Newtown service last year, union representatives have little optimism over their chances on this issue.

SEPTA won another court case over the union issue in late September when a Federal court ruled against the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (BRAC) in its suit to block SEPTA's planned transfer of ticket sales functions on the ex-Reading side to an outside contractor. Following the court decision, SEPTA announced that it would transfer the ticket sales to its outside contractor, Blue Ribbon Services, Inc., on November 1, but BRAC has filed a further appeal, and it is now anticipated that the ConRail ticket sales personnel will finish out the year on their jobs.

General Manager Gunn and other high SEPTA officials have been saying, at least unofficially, that an interruption of rail service of at least one month should be expected January

1, and when service does resume, it will start on the ex-Reading side first. As of mid-October, there was no indication that SEPTA had done any recruitment of train service personnel. SEPTA will clearly need time to train new employees (or existing employees transferred from Transit Division jobs). Furthermore, SEPTA has no assurances as to which, or how many, existing ConRail employees will actually make the transition. Apparently, SEPTA hopes that a number of experienced workers will find continued employment under SEPTA's rules preferable to having no job at all, but the nature of railroad seniority means that the employees currently staffing commuter runs might not necessarily be the ones that ConRail will lay off. Based on limited information available from several sources, the scenario appears to be something like this: The commuter rail system will shut down following the final ConRail runs on New Year's Eve. A few days to a week later, SEPTA will begin training new train service crews over the ex-Reading trackage, with passenger service to resume on the Reading side around the end of January, or early February, once sufficient workers have been trained. It's anticipated that union challenges to the whole affair will be dealt with in court during this period. Once sufficient workers have been trained and the court challenges resolved, service will resume on the ex-Pennsy lines.

The decision to delay resumption of service on the Pennsy side (like SEPTA's decision to phase in outside contractors for ticket sales on the Reading side first) appears motivated by a very intense desire to avoid having any labor disruptions arising out of the transition spilling over and affecting Amtrak corridor operations. Should SEPTA's labor difficulties disrupt Northeast Corridor operations, the possibility would exist for an outside political solution being imposed, an eventuality that SEPTA would clearly like to avoid. The game plan appears to be to wait and see exactly what SEPTA is able to get away with on the Reading side, before any effort is made toward restoring the ex-PRR services.

It must be pointed out that there is a minority opinion among some observers that the threat of a system shutdown is somewhat of a bluff; part of a plan on SEPTA's part to put up a strong front and bully the unions into accepting the SEPTA plan without major opposition. While this is a possibility, most observers doubt that SEPTA will be in a position to fully staff its new commuter operations by January 1, 1983.

Business + Transit = Sales

■ In some communities hard-hit by economic difficulties, business and transit have formed an alliance of sorts to benefit both.

On the busy post-Thanksgiving day that marks the traditional beginning of the Christmas shopping season, a local Syracuse (NY) bank arranged for free rides for all on CNY Centro, the area's transit carrier. The Merchants National Bank paid for all trips to help "restore consumer confidence" during the recession.

During November and December, the First Bank of Milwaukee is subsidizing the downtown shuttle bus that was in danger of being dropped by the county transit system. The bank will be assisted by other business firms to keep the service running in 1983. Also in the Beer City, Pabst Brewing

Last summer, McDonald's Corporation gave free food coupons to each buyer of a monthly transit pass in San Bernardino (CA). Both McDonald and Omnitrans saw increased business as the result of the promotion.

In Ann Arbor, rides on Friday and Saturday will be free through December 18. The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority will itself foot the bill; riders will be given a coupon booklet good for prizes in a drawing offered by 50 downtown businesses.

These, according to the "Wall Street Journal", are not the only such promotions reflecting a marriage of business and transit interests. While by no means widespread, these promotions are beginning to catch on, breaking the traditional resistance of business to support the automobile's rival. In Bridgeport (CT), for example, over a hundred local merchants have been offering bargains of as much as 40% on items bought with coupons tied to the purchase of tokens and passes. And, in Cincinnati, business concerns are assisting in the subsidization of a downtown shuttle route; the Westin Hotel will pay its entire weekday cost from Thanksgiving through Christmas. Sunday trips in Rochester (NY) are also free through the holidays, courtesy of local merchants.

Hacking It In Style

■The Houston Yellow Cab Company has joined the computer age with an advanced taxi-dispatching system. The new system replaces the traditional voice communications between dispatcher and driver by dashboard screens that provide the driver with information about potential fares. Calls requesting taxi service are entered directly into the computer for immediate dispatch to the closest available taxi.

Westward Ho!

■Chicago's Regional Transportation Authority has leased six bilevel suburban rail cars not currently needed for revenue service to CalTrans for its new commuter service in the Los Angeles area. The cars are part of a group placed in storage when ridership on the RTA-subsidized lines declined sharply because of stiff fare hikes.

The cars are being leased to CalTrans for \$3,000 per month each for service on the new commuter line to Oxnard. The run, over Southern Pacific rails, began October 18, serving the San Fernando and Simi Valleys north and northwest of Los Angeles. SP predictably objected to the use of its tracks for the new service, claiming interference with its freight runs; appeals to the courts are currently in progress.

The service originally began with Amfleet coaches leased from the Corporation, but popularity of the service prompted an increase in seating capacity (the Amcoaches

carry 86) that Amtrak was not able to provide, hence the call to the RTA. Its Budd-built coaches each seat 156.

The RTA cars went into service November 15, but were later sidelined because of their incompatibility with the SJ freight locomotives used to power the trains. Amtrak units are being sought to remedy the problem.

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12 Noon*	2:49 P	12 Noon*	2:49 P
2:00 P	4:59 P	2:00 P	4:59 P
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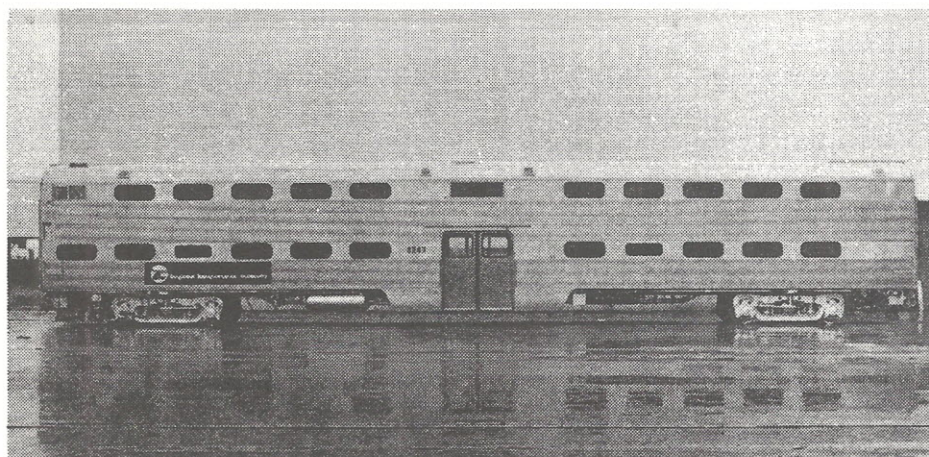
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RIDING HIGH

The Brits always seem to think of it first; we tinker with it, charge more for it, and then call it ours (witness shortbread, trench coats, and mystery stories). So it is with double-decker buses, six of which started rolling through the Hub November 1 on a special shoppers' route. Not a bad deal, either: the fare is 50 cents for adults — 25 cents for senior citizens and children. Boston Doubledeckers Inc. is a private company that's been in negotiation with the city for years to get the current operation under way; permanent signs with a route map have been placed at the 28 stops

the buses make — from department store to gallery to shopping mall and back again. The double-deckers travel to and fro among the Back Bay, Downtown Crossing, and Faneuil Hall Market every 10 minutes, with a conductor on board to help all those foot-weary shoppers with their haul. Starting at the Pru on Boylston and continuing into Downtown Crossing, the buses also run to Quincy Market and through the Newbury Street district. So happy lugging — and sightseeing. Now if they'd just start serving a good tea and scones on the upper deck. . . .

Double-decker buses run six days a week (never on Sunday) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

