

Green Pennant Special

October 1994 OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

Run 129

Welcome to another issue of The Green Pennant Special. It is through this publication that we endeavour to keep the membership informed on happenings in the organization and the transit industry.

*** OCTOBER MEETING ***

The October meeting of The Omnibus Society of America will be held on October 7, 1994, at the Wells Park Field House, located at 2333 W. Sunnyside in Chicago. The meeting will begin at 7:00 pm.

The program for the evening will be a slide presentation by John LeBeau on the suburban bus operations of PACE.

*** NOVEMBER MEETING ***

The November meeting of The Omnibus Society of America will be held on November 4, 1994, at the Welles Park Field House located at 2333 W. Sunnyside in Chicago. The meeting will begin at 7:00pm.

Our meeting for the evening will be a continuation of movies of past OSA fan trips taken over the years by Dave Stanley.

*** ELECTION NOTICE ***

It is that time of the year when positions on the Board of Directors of OSA come up for reelection. If any current paid up members wishes to run for director of OSA, please let one of the current directors know at the November meeting. Ballots will be mailed out toward the third week of November, and must be received by the start of the December meeting.

*** FAN TRIP ***

OSA will be operating a fan trip in Milwaukee, Wi., on Saturday, October 22, 1994, using one of the MCTS RTS ad buses.

Our trip will originate from the Amtrak Depot in Milwaukee at 10:15 am and will return to that location about 6 hours later.

*** CTA CORNER ***

ON THE EARLY MORNING of Monday, September 12, 1994, the CTA implemented their new night-owl transfer pulse point at State and Washington.

On that date 13 owl routes were either extended, rerouted or had their layover points changed to this new location.

The No. 12 Roosevelt, No. 66 Chicago and No. 72 North were extended from their former terminals to this new location.

Routes No. 4 Cottage Grove, No. 22 Clark, No. 56 Milwaukee and No. 60 Blue Island were rerouted to State and Washington while Routes No. 20 Madison, No. 23 Washington Exp., No. 29 State, No. 38 Michigan Exp., No. 62 Archer and No. 151 Sheridan had their layover points changed to serve this location.

AN AUTOMATED FARE-collection system that the CTA hoped to install next year will most likely be delayed until fiscal year 1996, according to preliminary public transit budgets released by the RTA.

CTA President Robert Belcaster had hoped to get the automated "smart card" system in place this fall in at least two test stations and to add the new technology to most stations in 1995. But the manufacture of the complex collection machines, estimated to cost the CTA \$55 million, will take longer than expected.

The only sure thing in 1995 is that the system will be tested in two "L" stations, one along the Howard/Dan Ryan Red Line and one along the Ravenswood Brown Line.

Once in place, CTA officials say, the automated system will allow the transit agency to accurately count ridership for the first time. Under the new system, each time a passenger boards a rail or bus line, a fare card must be inserted into a machine that registers the ride.

THE CTA IS TO receive \$43 million through a state program to begin engineering work on renovations along the Ravenswood Brown line.

CTA CHAIRMAN Clark Burrus and CTA President Robert Belcaster both made the city papers when Burrus (cont. page 2)

came out and stated that the CTA was thinking of raising fares to meet a \$19 million shortfall for 1995, Belcaster, announced that the CTA should cut fares to attract new riders.

As of now, the CTA is talking about a "fare restructuring" rather than a fare increase. Whatever verbage you use, CTA riders will probably be paying more for rides next year.

The prices of tokens and transfers are being reviewed, as are cash fare levels. Increasing the price of the monthly pass, or eliminating it altogether, also is under consideration.

CTA President Robert Belcaster and top staff members have been studying about 90 different fare "menus" as they seek changes likely to produce the money needed while affecting ridership as little as possible.

One possible approach would be to increase the fare during rush hours while retaining the current fare, or lowering it, during off peak periods such as weekends and holidays when the CTA has excess capacity.

This current round of fare restructuring talk began September 20th when the RTA released tentative 1995 budget marks for the three agencies they fund: CTA, Metra and Pace. All these agencies were to receive less money than they requested.

The reason for this shortfall is that the special regional sales tax that helps fund public transit will bring in less money than was predicted earlier this year. Public funding earmarked for the RTA will fall \$8.5 million short of the expected mark.

The result is that the CTA tentatively is to get about \$376 million from the RTA instead of the more than \$390 million the CTA says it needs for a balanced budget.

Whatever form of "restructuring" the CTA settles upon, GPS will let you know.

*** METRA RAILS ***

Metra, the suburban railroad agency, hopes to complete stations, parking lots and track modifications along its new Wisconsin Central route. The line, which will operate from

downtown to far northwest suburban Antioch is scheduled to open by 1996.

Metra also is planning to spend at least \$30 million to complete the Chicago & North Western Atrium Center commuter station downtown. More than \$120 million has gone into the project already.

*** CIRCULATOR NEWS ***

A \$14 million tax levy on downtown businesses to help pay for a light rail system was requested by the Central Area Circulator Board of Directors.

If the levy is approved by the City Council, a cooperative of downtown businesses will form a special service area tax levy. The levy would increase the businesses' annual property taxes by just under two-tenths of one percent.

The \$775 million proposed circulator light rail system would form a horseshoe seven square miles around the city's central business district, linking McCormick Place, Navy Pier and the West Side Metra commuter stations with businesses, hotels and cultural attractions.

The project suffered a setback in July when the Senate Appropriations Committee voted against budgeting \$50 million in 1995 for early construction on the project. The House Appropriation Committee had approved the funding.

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Green Pennant Special is distributed to the members of The Omnibus Society of America at no additional charge and is published in lieu of the regular meeting notice. There is no set frequency of issue.
