

Transport Central

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COLUMN ONE

A TRANSIT MAN LOOKS AT THE AIRPORT MESS
(OR HOW'RE YOU GONNA KEEP 'EM
DOWN ON THE FARM
WHEN THAT'S WHERE THEY'RE BUILDING
THE AIRPORTS THESE DAYS?)

Now everyone knows of the urban transit dilemma wherein the decrease in patronage on city transit systems (as on interurban electric railways in the past) due to lack of service and high fares forces further service cuts and fare increases to accelerate the process, but there seems to be a blind spot when it comes to a similar problem with air travel and ground transportation.

It has been quite some time since flying was considered the poor cousin (and risk) of the transportation industry; in fact flying is now the way to go for many and an accepted risk for the rest. Just stop to consider that we are now on the verge of an era in air travel that boggles the imagination. On order are large and giant-size long-distance planes plus the apparently successful C-5A Galaxy which (when it comes out in a civilian version) will stack 'em in like it's going out of style to the tune of 350-500 passengers.

To a system which is even now breaking down from congestion both in the air and on the ground I don't know just what they propose to do when the weekly jetliner commuter's ticket is more common than the trolley pass of yesteryear, and air traffic is not just double but ten times what it is now. Forgetting for a moment the touchy PATCO situation, it seems that existing electronics technology and a little judicious rescheduling of flights (not everyone has to take that 5:00 PM dinner jet) will take care of the airborne problems, but deciding what to do with the passengers once they are on the ground seems to have escaped the planners.

Looking ahead, large airports (especially regional ones) will have a main terminal with ticket offices, control facilities, restaurants and the like, while remote boarding points will be used for the hundreds of daily arrivals and departures. Several airports already using such remote loading zones have their own internal shuttle systems of buses or rubber tired trams. These are inherently inefficient and **require more labor** (rapidly becoming our most priceless commodity) in the form of operators and on-board "stewardesses".

I can suggest several alternatives: an underground passage with a moving beltway, small cars on an endless chain similar to the "People Mover" at Disneyland, or a beltway with seats such as was used by General Motors in its World's Fair exhibit. For a high-capacity system, Westinghouse's SkyBus system might be the ideal answer (perhaps here better than elsewhere) with its fast acceleration and automated guidance and control system. (It now appears as if Miami will try out the SkyBus as an internal shuttle, if not elsewhere). Use of the other systems remains speculative, but it is important to note that not one of them requires attendants or operators. While locked "on" during the day, they might be photocell or treadle operated during less busy periods.

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When increasing congestion at close-in fields requires the construction of larger, regional airports, some agency will either have to provide low-cost, fast and reliable public transportation to nearby metropolitan areas or else gobble up large tracts of land for long-term storage of automobiles. In any event, there must be a reasonable alternative to waiting for a sufficient limousine load in order to get downtown, besides having to pay a stiff price for your trouble. Although not everyone arriving at the airport is bound for the city's central area, substantial numbers of travelers are, and a means of quick transportation over this essential trunk line would go a long way toward easing the ground squeeze.

I would propose a system of city-owned parking lots offering large capacity, low rates and adequate security facilities. These lots would be located at convenient points around the perimeter of the central business district, preferably on a belt expressway encircling that area. These lots could be connected to the city transit system by anything from express freeway buses to a median strip rail line. If this network were tied into the airport-downtown link, it would not only be possible to alleviate the jetport parking jam, but to make a significant start on a really comprehensive plan to ease the downtown parking squeeze. Another step that might be taken to alleviate auto crowding at the airport itself would be to require airlines employees to use one of these remote parking lots, issuing them reduced-rate tokens or even free passes on the transit link in return.

The entire concept of remote parking is not new; one of the best examples is in Fort Worth, where Leonard's Department Store operates a subway of about a mile in length from the store's basement to a parking lot built far enough out to have sufficient space for all of its customers. The ride is free (as is parking with a purchase) and the line has caught on, not only resulting in increased revenues for the store, but also to provide a needed transportation link for commuters. As a matter of fact, although the store itself does not open until 9:30 AM, service on the line begins at 7:30, and some 5,000 to 10,000 riders each day use the new subway facility.

In essence, I suppose one could say that I favor the idea of an authority having comprehensive control over public transit, expressways and all airport facilities within the metropolitan area.

HARRY R. PORTER

(Harry R. Porter is a Louisville-based Transport Central staff member and the former editor of MTF. His contributions appear regularly in TC.)

Column One provides a forum for a broad spectrum of views on the transportation industry. We invite your comments on this series.

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

REFERENDA REPORT -- The rapid transit bond issue is officially on the November election ballot in Los Angeles county by virtue of action of the County Supervisors. It provides the voters with an opportunity to approve or reject a special sales and use tax of up to one-half of one per cent to be used as a primary source of funds to cover principal and interest incurred in the development of the rapid transit system.

Here is the wording which will appear on the ballot:

"RAPID TRANSIT: To reduce traffic congestion and improve public transportation by establishing a modern smog-free rapid transit system and expanded local transportation network by the acquisition and construction of any or all improvements, works, properties or facilities including stations, parking areas, or other facilities necessary or convenient therefor and the refunding of bonds constituting a district liability, together with incidental costs, shall the Southern California Rapid Transit District incur a bonded indebtedness in the principal amount of Two Billion Five Hundred Fifteen Million Dollars and shall a special sales and use tax be levied within the district at a maximum tax rate of up to one half of one per cent to be used as the primary source of funds to pay principal and interest on said indebtedness as provided in the ordinance calling the election?"

While some observers feel Los Angeles is unrealistic in attempting to get voter approval of a referendum this November, it must be said of Los Angeles that, unlike Seattle and Atlanta, this area contemplates the building and financing of its own system without relying on the Federal Government, which has no real funds budgeted for such a purpose.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority appears to be nearing a decision to reverse its previous stand and initiate a bond issue referendum for rapid transit this fall. Last April, after Governor Maddox vetoed a bill which would have permitted MARTA to sell bonds at a more favorable interest rate than is now possible (and which would have allowed government subsidies for operating a rapid transit system) MARTA indicated that a bond issue election this fall was not in the cards. Since then, however, MARTA has developed the argument that an additional delay in rapid transit construction would cost the taxpayers more millions, so they would be smart to vote for transit now and save some money. Even with that issue going for them, MARTA will have a tough time selling a \$400 million issue in a year when taxes are more unpopular than ever.

HIGH SPEED HASSLE -- The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) has officially rejected the 11 high speed cars, built by Budd, which were nearly identical to those which have thus far been rejected by the Penn Central for New York-Washington service. The 11 SEPTA Metroliners were to have been used in Philadelphia-Harrisburg service. The move by SEPTA is just another part of a long series of delays in completing the high speed cars. The Budd Company has threatened legal action against the Westinghouse Corporation, because Budd claims it is faulty Westinghouse equipment which has caused the cars to be delayed. Meanwhile, it has been reported that Budd has padlocked Westinghouse-equipped cars and is preventing further alterations by Westinghouse until the two companies can come to terms. In addition, the cars being tested (including those equipped by GE) continue to experience so many difficulties that all concerned are very pessimistic as to when service can begin.

DOT DOLES -- DOT's Urban Mass Transit Administration is presently working on these major applications: 1) A \$12 million bid by SEPTA for 48 new commuter cars for Philadelphia's Reading and Penn Central service, 57 new 35 and 45 passenger buses, Park'N'Ride facilities for the commuter

service, and a car washer and wheel truer for the Reading; 2) a \$34 million request by San Francisco's Municipal Railway for 600 motor buses, 160 trolley coaches, and 60 articulated (or 100 single-unit) streetcars to completely re-equip the fleet, save for the cable cars; and 3) the final application by Chicago's South Suburban Transit Authority to purchase 130 double-deck electrified commuter cars for the Illinois Central at a cost of \$24 million.

ONCE OVER QUICKLY -- The Washington and Old Dominion, a one-time electric interurban and of late a road to nowhere freight operation moved the last "clean-up" train over its 48 mile line August 26. The W&OD, a C&O affiliate, had been officially abandoned a month earlier, following a lengthy struggle with the ICC and in the courts....The militant Black United Front and other minority group organizations are threatening trouble if D.C. Transit fares are raised for the second time within a year in the Nation's Capital. Meanwhile, DCT owner O. Roy Chalk is seeking to remove the transit company's connections with his other financial holdings (including Trans Caribbean Airways) to possibly pave the way toward public ownership....Pennsylvania highway officials have been exploring the feasibility of paving various railroad rights-of-way in the state, including Red Arrow's Norristown line, for use by trucks and buses. Already the Commonwealth has agreed to pave the South Hills rail lines of Port Authority Transit in Pittsburgh for bus use....CTA's wildcat strike still goes on, though all lines now have at least some service....Add San Francisco's Muni to systems having an exact fare plan. Tokens will reappear in the near future, though a fare increase has been put off until year's end....Waukegan-North Chicago Transit has asked for state help to avert bankruptcy court. The line recently lost its lucrative Waukegan-O'Hare run....The city of Madison is preparing to take over Madison Bus Company's operations

RAIL REPORT -- L&N received permission to drop the Hummingbird, but the discontinuance has been held up by a court injunction....Norfolk & Western has withdrawn its Cincinnati-Portsmouth Powhatan Arrow petition. Present consist includes 1 baggage car and 1 dome coach out of Cincinnati....B&O's #11-12 (the Metropolitan, St. Louis-Cincinnati) has made its last run.... A BLF&E/ORC&B/BRT/SUNA brotherhood merger into the United Transportation Union should be a reality by next January 1....Hopefully, according to RI president Jervis Langdon, the complex Rock Island merger case should be resolved within 18 months. He made the statement at the annual Rock Island stockholders' meeting....Words from Strike City: The Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry has requested President Johnson intervene in the month-old Belt Railway of Chicago strike....A threatened walkout against the Illinois Central has been averted until later this month.

PLANE FACTS -- Amid considerable publicity, the 188 STOL (Short TakeOff and Landing), an airplane that promises to aid in solving congestion at major airports made its first public flight Wednesday at builder McDonnell Douglas' facilities in St. Louis. The STOL, powered by four 1500 HP turboprop engines, will begin demonstration flights in cooperation with Eastern Air Lines from Washington next week....The little Stinson craft that figured in the first flight from the U. S. to Scandinavia via the polar route is now safely in Greenland, having been airlifted by a GreenlandAir helicopter from its 40-year glacier home (where it crash landed in 1928) on a polar ice cap....The 50th anniversary of the first daylight, one day flight of air mail from Chicago to New York City was commemorated by the Chicago chapter of the Air Mail Pioneers September 10....Now Mohawk Airlines has a new game—Guess the ATC (Air Traffic Control) Delay. Passengers coming closest to the actual touchdown time receive gold chips worth a free cocktail or a dollar....TCA will lease two 747s during the winter of 1970....General Dynamics' Convair Division is eyeing a return to the commercial craft division with a proposed 88 passenger jet tabbed the 660.Northeast has leased 3 727-200s from Greyhound Leasing.