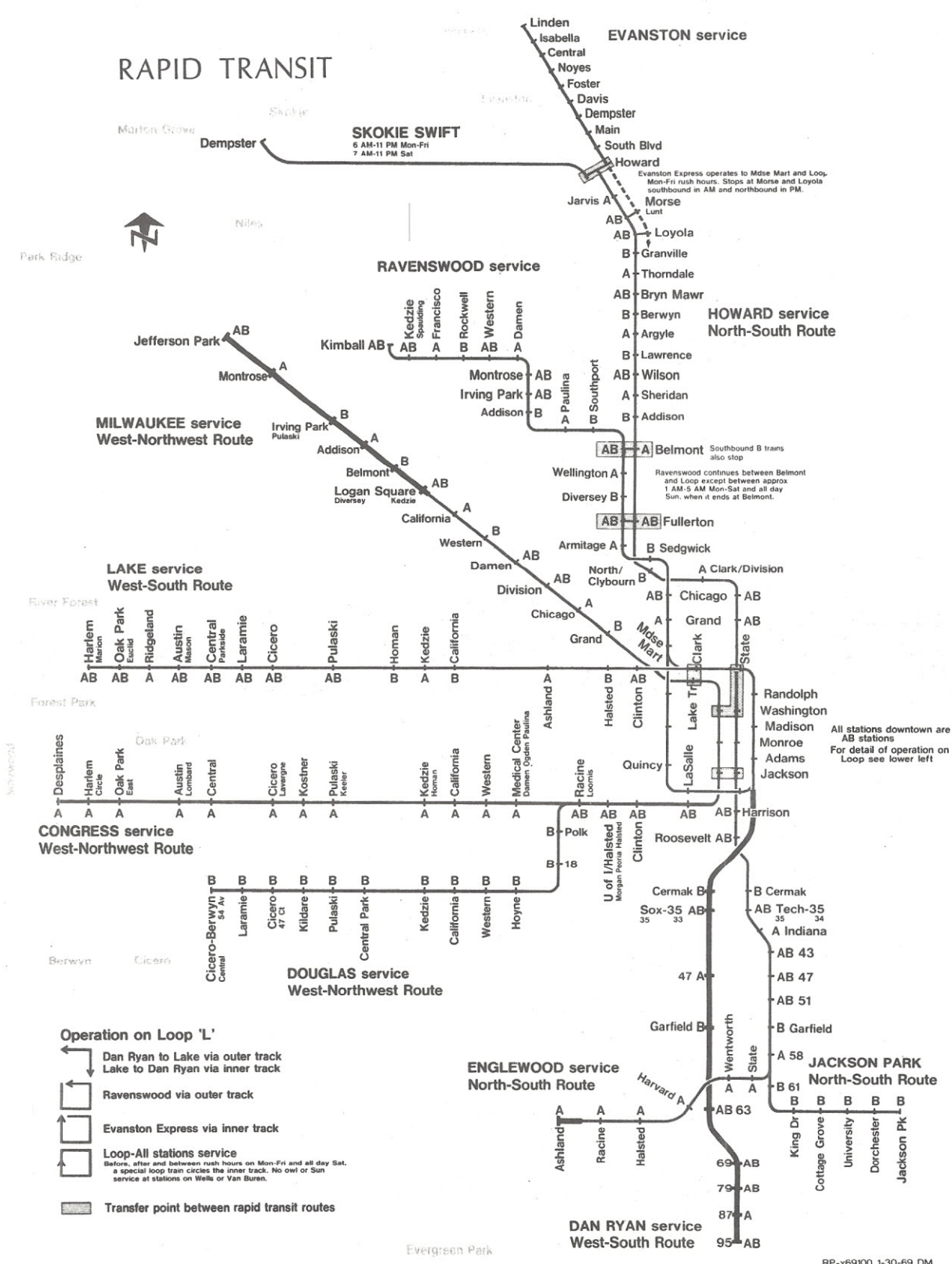


Transport Central



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MetroLiner Memo

Penn Central's second MetroLiner went into service last Monday, and PC officials are optimistic that it will be as big a success as the first train, which has carried nearly 15,000 passengers since it began operating January 16. The second MetroLiner, like the first, will consist of four snack bar/coaches and two parlor cars; all seats are reserved.

Already, plans are underway for a third MetroLiner, which may operate on an even faster schedule. PC planners are considering a trip originating in New York at about 7:30 AM, returning from Washington between 4:30 and 5:00 PM. This trip would make only one stop, in Philadelphia, and would take but 2:35 to complete. The first two MetroLiners schedule in at 2:59; most regular conventional trains take close to four hours to make the 225 mile trip.

Outgoing Federal Railroad Administrator Scheffer Lang believes that the slow start in MetroLiner service will prove to be an advantage as far as the federal demonstration is concerned. The actual Federal participation in the program cannot begin until 20 straight coaches plus eight snack bar coaches are in service. DOT will not count parlor cars, nor more than the eight snack bar units, and all 20 straight coaches are Westinghouse-built.

"What is happening", said Lang, "is that a lot of the one-time riders are taking the train during these first few weeks. As far as the demonstration is concerned, we wouldn't learn what we need to know with these kind of riders inflating figures. This way, by the time the federal demonstration begins, all of the curiosity seekers will be out of the way, and we can get down to the business of determining just who can be attracted by this service.

One-time riders or not, the trains have thus far been operating at near capacity. Since their schedules are by no means the most convenient for all concerned, patronage on regular PC trains has shown little decrease. The Afternoon Congressional, for example, which leaves Washington a mere 5 minutes after the New York-bound MetroLiner has been holding its own.

DOT officials now believe that PC, Budd and Westinghouse have finally resolved difficulties with the remaining coaches. Most of the problems centered around the fact that substation circuit breakers would flip on every time more than two Westinghouse cars operated at high speeds. Apparently, a relatively simple device has been developed to overcome this difficulty without completely rewiring the coaches or the substations; though there is still a dispute as to who will pay for the necessary modifications, but DOT is optimistic that this will soon be settled.

Tests have been conducted with three Westinghouse cars and the results have been more than satisfactory. Plans now call for tests with the rest of the equipment. Without making a specific prediction, PC is looking toward all of the Westinghouse cars being in operating condition by the end of May or the beginning of June, at which point hourly service between New York and Washington can begin, as well as half-hourly service between New York and Philadelphia.

Passenger reaction to the new trains has been quite favorable, although PC and DOT officialdom concede that the ride on non-welded rail is quite rough. Nevertheless, Corridor passengers, accustomed to dirty, slow, and poorly-lit trains have viewed the MetroLiners as welcome relief.

The consensus here is that the trains will be a success and that, in the long run, the Westinghouse cars may be better operating equipment than the GE cars, which are already in operation.

Meanwhile, with the probability that the Westinghouse coaches will soon be ready, the State of Pennsylvania is moving ahead with its plans for the so-called Mini-Corridor service to be operated between Harrisburg and Philadelphia. Like the full Northeast Corridor project, this Pennsylvania experiment will mix MetroLiner cars with regular trains. At one point in the four year experiment (versus two years for the DOT New York-Washington service) plans call for hourly service between Harrisburg and Philadelphia. Harrisburg has not yet reached the 100,000 population mark, and the major cities on the line do not begin to compare with Baltimore or Newark in size or importance. Thus, if Pennsylvania can develop passengers for this virtual "old-time interurban" service, it will really prove that adequate rail service has appeal for the public.

Even if the New York-Washington trains are a success, it will be argued that the Northeast Corridor is unique, that air corridors and roads are terribly overcrowded, and that conventional trains are still making a profit. But if the Mini-Corridor packs them in, opponents of adequate rail service had better re-evaluate their arguments.

Pennsylvania, through its State Department of Highways is now involved in the Harrisburg project because SEPTA bowed out when the flap over the MetroLiners developed. Actually, SEPTA, as a regional authority, should never have become involved in the long-distance service in the first place, but did so because of political considerations. It is apparently out of the picture for good as of now.

Harrisburg trains will operate at no more than 90 mph. The MetroLiners will be alternated with SilverLiners, and a few standard passenger trains pulled by GG1's will also provide service. If the full plans develop, the Harrisburg run may well prove to be the more interesting of the two corridor services, and plans are already under way to coordinate trains on the two routes. The cars are nearly ready, and the plans are in the making; now the people will tell the story.

NEWSFRONT

THE SUCKLING PIG -- Railroad management, this time represented by the L&N, has bent under pressure again from operating unions, this time represented by the UTU (nee BRT). The issue of the number of trainmen in freight crews has been compromised temporarily, at least on the L&N, at a cost of some \$2½ million annually. One half of the line's 500 freight crews will be increased by one man each during the next six months, with the remainder subject to continuing joint negotiations. The decision follows a ten year battle over crew size in which Congress ordered the parties to agree to a settlement which finally took the form of attrition. With the finale effects of the agreement a fact, the union resumed its original position, raising the question, why bother anymore?

PENN CENTRAL POTPOURRI -- PC 400, Baltimore to Philadelphia, is off....The powers-that-be in the Passenger Department have proposed a 10% increase in all non-commuter fares (except subsidized services) to be effective March 1....The Maryland Public Service Commission will undertake a 60 day inspection of all passenger equipment used by PC (and B&O) within the state following complaints from passengers as well as negative reports in informal Commission observations....Lest TC's loyal readers believe we only report the sour news, we apologize for failing to report that PC opened a new depot at Rensselaer, N. Y., December 29, replacing PC-D&H joint operations at the old Albany station.

ODDS AND ENDS -- C & O has rescheduled its Sunday-only PERE MARQUETTE, Grand Rapids-Muskegon to Chicago from a 5:30 PM departure to 1:00 PM; advertised as providing better connections to the West at Chicago, it appears more important to C&O as a way to drop a set of extra equipment on Sundays (the same consist can now return from Chicago at 5:15 PM)...Electro-Motive is building 25 giant locomotives, dubbed the Centennial, for the Union Pacific's commemoration this year of that historic Promontory Point ceremony in 1869. The diesel engines (EMD claims they will be the largest in the world) will develop 6,600 horsepower, stretching some 98 feet and weighing 536,000 pounds...The ICC will reconsider its already-approved decision granting permission for L&N to acquire portions of the C&EI; L&N and the North Western requested the rehearing...Complaints about diminishing railroad service in the New York-Washington corridor will be aired today (February 14) at a unique meeting of officials from the regulatory commissions of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey and Delaware in Baltimore.

JET JOTTINGS -- Airliner clubs (formed to purchase an aircraft phased out by a commercial line to operate on charter flights for members) now are subject to much stiffer FAA regulations. Only two such organizations have thus far been certified to operate their planes; 38 applications were denied...An FAA spokesman said Wednesday that several systems designed to detect potential hijackers would soon be tested at several airports; he did not elaborate on the methods to be used...A Venezuelan DC-9 hijacked to Cuba will not be returned to its home base until a flap over a Cuban fishing boat seized by Venezuela is settled. The Castro government further will not release the plane until Venezuela sends money for fuel for the Aeropostal jet. The DC-9 was the 16th hijacked to the island nation thus far this year...Boeing's 747 made its maiden flight near Seattle last Sunday, marred only by some minor flap difficulty which curtailed its flight time. The first 747 is to enter service later this year...A NASA official urged an immediate start on the construction of an airport one mile out in Lake Erie from Cleveland, while a proposed \$168,000,000 northwest Indiana airport was held to be financially feasible by a consulting firm...New York Airways (the helicopter and STOL carrier) will partially link its operations with American Airlines, providing for joint ticketing and reservations services...National Airlines operations are almost 90% normal, despite a continuing strike of mechanics...President ordered the CAB to vacate its orders in the transpacific case; he reserved the final decisions for himself...Piedmont has asked for authority to render service Louisville to St. Louis.

LONG HAULS -- Cunard has asked the British government to enter its dispute with John Brown Engineering, Ltd., over the ill-starred QUEEN ELIZABETH II...Greyhound has lost its option to purchase that choice bit of downtown property on which to construct a new Chicago terminal (T/C - 07/02/67) and is now seeking alternative sites for the needed larger structure...Admiralty Enterprises of New York has opted for the purchase of the Grace Line Steamship Company. Admiralty owns Prudential Lines, and is corporately linked with 20th Century-Fox.

METROPOLITAN REPORT -- This week's cover details CTA's new rapid transit system scheduled to go into service in late summer with the opening of the two new median strip routes (TC - 02/07/69)...The not-for-profit and tax-exempt Municipal Railway Improvement Corporation of San Francisco has been officially established. After a few formalities are disposed of, it will purchase 190 GMC diesel buses and 10 experimental Flexible buses for well over \$7,000,000; the units will be leased to the Municipal Railway for operation...The Cleveland Transit System will apply to DOT for funds to purchase 10 additional Airporter rapid transit cars to aid in handling the increased business on the Airport extension...Add New York City and Davenport (Iowa) to the burgeoning list of Exact Fare cities; the list now numbers almost 40...The Seattle City Council has authorized bus, truck and taxi drivers to carry tear gas-emitting weapons...WMA Transit of suburban Washington has asked for a 10¢ adult cash fare hike.