

Transport Central



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Ken Hayes

I recently visited a small, six-bus local transit company serving a city of 50,000 with six-day hourly and half-hourly service over four routes. The surprise came when I found out they were making money—a good deal of it—and without any charter service. The logical question is "how"?

There are a number of possible answers to that question. One is that the city cooperates with the company by providing under lease four GMC TDH-3501's, but that is not all. Another is a good preventive maintenance program which prevents costly repairs and keeps mechanical efficiency high. Another reason, that perhaps this city is bus-minded, might be offered but on further investigation it was found that people here are no more oriented toward transit than in any other city of comparable size. It was, however, found to be a walking city; its residents prefer to walk short distances rather than use an automobile.

The prime reason turned out to be the ingenuity of the owner. Instead of the normally-designed route system used everywhere (that is, back and forth on the same streets in both directions), he has adopted system-wide loop service. Each of the four routes is a loop, and seldom do the two directions (inbound and outbound) come within two blocks of each other.

This system works better than the "normal" one for two reasons: First, and applicable to all transit operations in any city, loop lines enable the system to service twice as many persons as single-street routes, doubling the number of potential patrons. Secondly, and perhaps applicable only to "walking" cities, since the population enjoys short strolls it is not unwilling to hoof it three or four blocks to catch a bus, rather than expecting it to be at a nearby corner.

It is true that loop service probably could not be applied on every route in every city. Nevertheless, it is an idea worth considering in these areas: the operation that needs a boost in per-mile patronage; on routes that are marginal; in "walking" cities where it is presently not in use; selectively in larger operations as a "neighborhood" service; and so forth. And it is a potential improvement tool that would cost very little to implement.

(Ken Hayes lives with his wife Lynn in Hayward, California, where he is an Administrative Analyst for a public utility company. He is connected with the transit industry through education and his own company.)

A deep, low bow to Fletcher Wilson of the Chicago Sun-Times for the excellent article on TC's Editor/Publisher that appeared in the June 19 issues of that publication. In almost half a page, the paper's long-time transportation writer outlined this reporter's transportation plan for Chicago and included some kind words for TC. From here, many thanks.

NEWSFRONT

CAPITOL COMMENTS -- The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to review two passenger train-off cases (C&EI's Georgian and L&N's Hummingbird) because lower courts have refused to review ICC decisions in the Section 13(a) proceedings; at present only the railroads may appeal these decisions.... The ICC has issued a report to the Senate Surface Transportation subcommittee warning that the diversification of railroads (and the purchase of truck lines by conglomerates) is a threat to the nation's surface transportation system; specifically, the ICC pointed out that higher profit subsidiaries have put the railroads in the "back pasture", creating a deterioration of service and a continuing decline in passenger operations (see below).

ANGEL FEATHERS -- Some famous names remaining in passenger service are up for discontinuance next month; they include: PC 303-304, James Whitcomb Riley, Chicago-Cincinnati (for July 20); E-L 5-6, Lake Cities, Chicago-Hoboken (for July 18); CNW 209-214, Peninsula 400, Green Bay-Ishpeming (for July 16) (the city of Menominee, Mich. will oppose this petition as well as Ann Arbor's bid to discontinue its tri-weekly car ferry from that point to Frankfort, Mich.); NP 1-2, Mainstreeter, St. Paul-Seattle (for July 13); and SP 51-52, San Joaquin Daylight, Los Angeles-Oakland, to the California PUC (and then to the ICC?).

MORE -- Southern Railway 41-42, the Pelican, York-Chattanooga, made its final runs June 12.... Ex-interurban Illinois Terminal, which just a few months ago considered giving up all operations, has taken delivery of six EMD SD-39 locomotives for Peoria-St. Louis freight service.... Three railroads have notified the ICC that they intend to withdraw all objections to the proposed C&O/B&O-N&W merger. The Milwaukee, North Western and Bessemer & Lake Erie have now dropped their opposition to the marriage (which would also include the B&M, Reading and Central of New Jersey in the Dereco subsidiary); only Penn Central and Grand Trunk are still opposed to the merger.

OPPORTUNITY LINE -- The Milwaukee Road and the Chicago & North Western are asking the public and their employees to suggest a name for the merged operation if and when the marriage takes place. If any of our readers have a name to suggest to replace the working title of Chicago Milwaukee & North Western Transportation Company, send it to the President's Merger Committee, Room 500, 120 South Riverside Plaza, Chicago, Illinois 60606.

AIRLINE ACTION -- Chicago's O'Hare, by the time you read this, may have been the next target of a slowdown by members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). About 75 controllers called in "sick" on Wednesday at Denver and Kansas City as a part of the continuing dispute with the Federal Aviation Administration over working conditions that caused massive traffic jams in the sky last summer. The Controllers contend that there are just too many planes in the sky to be handled adequately.... American Airlines will begin nonstop jet service between Chicago and San Antonio with two daily flights beginning July 7.... A CAB examiner has recommended that Mohawk be granted rights to Chicago as an extension of its present services to Erie. The airline plans to provide two daily jet (BAC-111) round trips between Utica, Syracuse, Erie and Chicago, and between Albany, Binghamton, Elmira and the Windy City.... The CAB has granted Piedmont rights to Chicago, on a route between Richmond, Roanoke, Bristol, Huntington, Charleston and Ashland.

LONG HAULS -- Man bites dog: Frontier has announced it will probably ask to suspend air service to seven Montana communities: Miles City, Glendive, Sidney, Wolf Point, Glasgow, Havre and Lewistown. Poor patronage and low subsidy payments are cited as the reason for the plane-offs. ...The British-built Concorde 002 will tour Britain in low-level flight in August to "show off" the sleek SST....President Nixon has proposed a tax of 8 per cent on airline tickets for domestic flights, a hike of 3 per cent. The boost is part of a program to provide funds for the improvement of facilities at the nation's airports that also includes a tax of \$3 on U.S.-originated international flights; a tax of 5 per cent on air freight waybills, and a tax of 9¢ per gallon on all aviation fuel used by non-commercial and non-military flights (a hike of 7¢ per gallon over the current rate). The construction program is to involve the expenditure of some \$5 billion over a 10-year period.

TWO MORE -- In the wake of scandals involving the Authority, the Illinois legislature is expediting bills calling for the reduction of tolls on the 185-mile Illinois Tollway system, along with salary cuts for the chairman and commissioners. The commission was found to be maintaining a fleet of helicopters and light planes in excess of that which seemed to be necessary to properly supervise its operations. In addition, bonds are being paid off ahead of schedule, but the prospects of the highways becoming freeways in the foreseeable future are dim. A great deal of intercity bus traffic uses the system around Chicago and to the west and north; the West leg is to be extended some 80 miles to Rock Falls from its present terminus west of Aurora....A plug is in order for the Steamship Historical Society of America, and its quarterly publication Steamboat Bill. Those interested in the bounding main may contact the Society at 414 Pelton Avenue, Staten Island NY 10310.

METROPOLITAN REPORT -- That diesel fuel shortage in Vancouver that temporarily reinstated operation on the TENTH-HASTINGS trolley coach line only lasted a week (TC 06 Jun 69); motor bus operation has resumed and BC Hydro is now up to 24 rush hour spare electric units....The Illinois Central can now raise its minimum fares from 35¢ to 45¢; tariffs to Washington Park Race Track will go up a dime....The first trial runs through the first 8 mile section of the new Mexico City subway began on Friday (June 20). Public use of the line between Chapultepec castle and the airport will begin in August. The fare then will be one peso (about 8¢ U.S.)....Transit operations in Manchester, N.H. have ceased.... There are recurrent rumors that CTA's new Budd cars are being tested on SEPTA's Broad Street subway in Philadelphia....Toronto is ordering 50 new buses, 40 from GM of Canada and 10 from Western Flyer....Service is to continue after all in Paducah, a Chromalloy American property.

DOT DOLES -- To Bi-State Transit of St. Louis for 715 lock boxes and six strong rooms at BST garages; to Williamsport, Pa., to assist the city in the purchase of the Williamsport Bus Company; to six universities (U of Minnesota, Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, Florida State, American, Catholic, Georgetown, George Washington, Howard and Maryland Universities of Washington, U of Washington and U of Oklahoma) for urban transportation programs; to continue the "employment express" of Boston's MBTA for ghetto-industrial district service; to Chicago for the C&NW RR-Lake "L" "Northwest Passage"; to San Francisco's Muni for 50 new buses; and to Watts and East Los Angeles for a new community transportation service. This joint DOT/HUD grant will provide a non-scheduled, non-fixed public transit service for the low-income areas in the two communities. Ten twelve-passenger buses will be used to get ghetto residents to work and back, functioning as a local circulation service during midday hours.