

Transport Central

NEWSFRONT

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GAPER'S BLOCK -- Motorists on the normally-crowded Dan Ryan Expressway leading into the Loop Friday morning had another reason to be delayed, over and above the usual crush of traffic and fender-bender accidents. The 35th Street station of the abuilding median strip rapid transit line was awash with people, and a pair of shiny new Budd cars were standing by. Since the line is not scheduled to open until later this year, and is yet incomplete, the presence of cars and crowds would do well to raise motorist's eyebrows.

Definitely not a mirage in the early-morning heat, the unusual sight was explained by the presence in town of the members of the Institute for Rapid Transit, which was holding its Annual Conference at the Marriott Motor Hotel on Chicago's northwest side (some distance from all but erratic public transportation, by the way, and many miles from rapid transit). In an attempt to provide a "big show" for IRT members, CTA, as the host group literally moved heaven and earth to have a segment of the new Ryan route in operation for the occasion. By yeoman work on the part of Budd and the Penn Central, two pair of the new 2200 series stainless steel cars arrived on the property in time for the run. CTA personnel worked long hours to hastily complete a rail connection between the rest of the system and the new line over the 18th Street aerial structure and diesel crane S-363 was called into service to trundle the equipment over the unpowered section to the area where the third rail had been installed. At 35th and 95th stations, the ends of the powered section, CTA personnel were still at work just minutes before the premiere run, making the facilities suitable for the occasion.

Mayor Daley arrived just after 8:30, and after the inevitable interviews and picture-taking the group headed down to the platform for the inaugural runs. Budd cars 2201-2202, resplendent in their stainless steel exteriors, and with air-conditioning mercifully in top working order, were selected to form the first passenger-carrying train on the new line. (Mates 2203-2204, and "Lake Street" 1964-vintage air-conditioned units 2031-2032 and 2043-2044 were also available for service). Almost effortlessly, the train accelerated and headed southward (only the northbound track between 35th and 95th is currently powered and available for operation), reaching the spacious 95th Street terminal station a scant ten minutes later. After further brief festivities (and more interviews) the official party reboarded the train and returned to 35th. Shuttle operation between that point and 95th then continued for the balance of the morning for IRT delegates and CTA personnel.

Personal observations: The new Budd cars ride extremely well, and are quieter than their Pullman (2000 series) predecessors. No doubt a bit of the Lindenwold technology has rubbed off on these units....The stations themselves are spacious, airy, clean-lined and a credit to their architects....The opening of this line will mark the debut of a new set of graphics on CTA rapid transit, a system tested in and around the new Englewood extension's Ashland station. All passenger informational signs and markers will adhere to a unified style, and will be cohesive throughout the system. Credit for the vastly-improved markings goes to George Krambles, CTA's Research and Planning superintendent.

METROPOLITAN REPORT -- DOT grants have gone to Lincoln, Nebraska, to aid in public transit planning for that area (NCL's Lincoln City Lines is the local operator); to Los Angeles' SCRTD to purchase 1500 locked-type fare boxes; and to Fresno Transit (city-operated) toward the purchase of 19 new 53-passenger A/C, radio-equipped diesel buses....Rio de Janeiro is about to begin construction of a \$725,000,000 area-wide subway system....The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority has taken over operation of Argentine Transit Lines, re-equipping it with newer KCATA buses. The suburban firm was formed a number of years ago to operate some former Kansas City Public Service routes with cast-off KCPS equipment.

FAILING GRADE -- The Burlington's campaign along with travel agents to boost California Zephyr patronage (TC 04 Oct 68) was a bust; only 50 of some 3000 agents participated and the total number of tickets sold failed to support the costs of one round trip between Chicago and San Francisco....UP 5-6, Omaha-Los Angeles, must run until October 30 pending ICC hearings....The Union of South Africa is building a new "Blue Train" for overnight service between Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape-town. The sleepers will have suites, instead of compartments, with bath- and dressing-rooms....Illinois Central completed its "Mini-Corridor" re-scheduling of trains between Chicago and Carbondale effective June 15; five trains each way on a schedule of 4:55 for the 307-mile run leave Chicago at 8:00 AM, 3:00, 5:00, 6:00 and 9:00 PM; and depart Carbondale at 4:00 and 6:00 AM, and 1:00, 4:00 and 7:00 PM.

WHAT A WAY TO GO -- The last word in "in" parties was held last Wednesday here in Chicago at a most unusual place--Grand Central Station. The American Institute of Architects, seeking a "far out" location for its 100th anniversary soiree, chose the ornate terminal because of its distinctive architecture (it was designed by Solon Beman in 1887 and dedicated in 1889) and because it will soon be demolished to make way for progress. About 4,000 partygoers (at \$25 a head) danced to the music of three bands, and sipped liquor at 12 bars. A dance floor was set up under the ornate trainshed, and comestibles were available at half a dozen snack bars. Some 35 contractors were involved in readying the grimy edifice for the ball; leftovers may be turning up for days.

UP AND AWAY -- Governor Ogilvie of Illinois is expected to sign into law a bill permitting airlines to search passengers for guns, explosives and other lethal weapons. The prime purpose of the measure is to reduce hijacking of flights from O'Hare....At about the time legislators were considering the bill, a Los Angeles-to-Miami flight became the 31st to be devoted to Jose Marti airport in Havana, bringing to 1611 the number of passengers taking the unauthorized side trip....A new national survey has revealed that 50 per cent of the American public prefers not to fly in the new jumbo jets. Most of the criticism arose out of the sheer size of the craft, with the possibilities of greater casualties in a crash.... For what it is worth, the CAB has again delayed the start of the Hawaii service, this time indefinitely.

LAST WORDS -- Spain is halting ferry services from Algeciras to Gibraltar, the last link with the mainland....Congress is to be asked to blacktop the Alaskan Highway....DOT plans to seek a federal order to temporarily suspend operations of Safeway Trails. The Trailways subsidiary is charged with violating federal safety regulations....The Queen Elizabeth (berthed in Florida) has been put up for sale by Cunard.