

Transport Central



COMMUTING: RAIL RENAISSANCE?

—A new TC series, beginning on page 7

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"A WEEKEND IN CANADA; A CHANGE OF SCENE. . ."

It takes exactly six minutes and fifty seconds to navigate the circular outer concourse on foot at Toronto International Airport; this is one of the miscellaneous statistics you discover by way of diversion while waiting for a hopelessly-delayed United flight to Chicago to finally board. You can also count the insurance machines (six), paperback book racks (three), and newspaper racks (also three), if you are of a statistical bent.

The plane (and many, many others) was delayed because of a continuing dispute between air traffic controllers and the Canadian government, and the end result is a virtual return to "seat of the pants" dispatching. Bad weather in the eastern area this reporter had planned to visit prompted an early return to the Windy City, and a first-hand look at what airline travel must have been like 30 or 40 years ago.

As you might expect, TIA was the scene of considerable confusion among passengers and even airline and airport employees, and a clear picture of just what was happening was impossible to assemble. At any rate, I was treated to the spectacle of a CP Air 707 being towed to a gate position by an airport vehicle scarcely larger than a Volkswagen, and a taxiway crammed full of planes awaiting their precious few minutes of takeoff time.

UAL 685 to Chicago is scheduled to depart Toronto for Chicago at 1935; it was one of the fortunate flights not to be canceled that evening; even so, it finally took off at 11:05 (despite a bit of turbulence and a front passing through, operations were not hampered to any significant degree by weather conditions).

We Chicago-bound passengers were duly informed to present ourselves for final customs clearance at 8:30 in the departure area (U.S.-bound flights from Toronto undergo U.S. Customs clearance at the Canadian airport), and at 9:00 we were ushered aboard the plane. A few minutes afterward, we left the gate and taxied over to a position sandwiched in between a CP Air 707 and a North Central Convair 580—and there we sat.

A brief announcement from the pilot confirmed our worst fears—"We will be sitting here for approximately one hour", he said. Exactly 55 minutes later, he came back on with another sad story—"We have just been informed that we will be sitting here for another hour."

And sit we did; a wait that included the rather strange spec-

metro memo

CHINA COMMENT

■ A few notes on transport in China gleaned from a study of the continuing television coverage of President Nixon's visit:

Local transit in Peking appears to be exclusively of the rubber-tired variety, composed of both motor and trolley bus services; the latter apparently do not penetrate to the Tien An Minh square that is the center of the city.

The motor buses come in several varieties; single units, motor and trailer combinations, and articulated units, all liveried in a tasteful blue and white scheme. The single units appear to be relatively short, by U.S. standards, say, about 30-35 feet in length; all units, according to one news report, are generically referred to as "Liberated" models, small and rough, but adequate. Drivers carry a feather duster to keep the seats clean. The newer buses have driver-controlled radios and loudspeakers (radio programming is said to be virtually 100% propagandistic in nature).

In Peking, at any rate, a monthly bus ticket is priced at the equivalent of \$1.05, high by Chinese standards. The rate is so set to encourage the use of alternative modes, such as bicycles (by comparison, an average dwelling unit rents for just over \$1.00 per month). Bicycles sell for about \$63 on the average, and there is no such thing as a time payment plan in the People's Republic, making such a purchase something that is considered very carefully, and saved for over a long period of time.

On the railway side, China's services appear to be more or less in step with the rest of the world, with air-conditioning and other amenities (the trains are spotless, according to those Western newsmen who have ridden them) commonplace (in contrast to the less-than-spectacular equipment extant in Hong Kong, on the other side of the border. Although information on the scope of China's present railway system is obviously meager, reports indicate that it is quite extensive, and used by many travelers, as autos are few and far between, and air service tends to be primitive.

In the latter respect, while details of China's civil air fleet are also sketchy (apparently at least some planes fulfill a dual civil/military role), it is a matter of record that most planes are piston powered, with jets in the minority. Only two types of jets are known to be in use, some Tridents (source unknown) and four 727s that apparently came from Pakistan International Airlines a few years ago. Evidently, large numbers of DC-3s, DC-6s and their Soviet equivalents perform the bulk of civil air service in China. As a matter of fact, as far as is known no airport in the whole of China can handle a jet of 747 size, and it is said that Peking airport had to be expanded recently to service 707s (the President's plane, for example, is on) and similar craft. Prior to this time, larger airli-

ners from other countries had to land at Shanghai or Canton, where runways were longer and could handle them

With China's increasing willingness to join the world community comes a similar willingness to improve its air fleet, and it has had negotiations with several countries and builders relative to the purchase of new and/or used aircraft. Until the recent "thaw" vis-a-vis the U.S., the People's Republic had not sounded out Boeing or McDonnell Douglas (or Lockheed) on the purchase of any U.S. jets, but observers predict that if the political climate is right, serious talks will soon begin, since the country's differences with the Soviet Union preclude present purchase of any Ilyushin or Tupolev craft, and the European market does not have that much to offer at present.

At any rate, the sketchy reports that have come out from behind the Bamboo curtain indicate that the basic transport network, land, sea and air, of the People's Republic, while perhaps obsolete in a strict jet age sense, is not primitive, and urban transport does a creditable job in even the largest cities. The Chinese have always had a way with technical devices and machines, and evidently have used these skills to build an efficient transport network, even to the extent of constructing a modern subway system (still unfinished) in Peking itself.

[Comment from this desk: While many may argue that the apparently-efficient transport systems of the People's Republic function as well as they do because of the absence of automobiles (one reporter had it that there were something like 30,000 Chinese for each auto), a case may be made for the thesis that public transport has a high priority in China, and that central planning has resulted in such an efficient system. Regardless of the merits of one political system vs. another (a subject I have no intention of getting into, since that is quite beyond the scope of this publication, and anything I might say is bound to be misinterpreted), it would appear that in virtually every other country in the world but the United States, public transport is accorded its proper place in the organized scheme of things. Isn't it possible that we might be doing something wrong for once, and that it is not the whole world, but us, that is out of step? —RRK]

PITTSBURGH POTPOURRI

■ The battle continues over the SkyBus: Now the minutes of a secret 1967 meeting at which the Port Authority's consultant recommended against building the SkyBus system have been produced in the stop-SkyBus suit initiated by Pittsburgh mayor Flaherty and many of his counterparts in the suburbs.

The consultant's rejection of SkyBus came from Walter S. Douglas, a partner in the consulting firm of Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade & Douglas (PBQD), which was hired by PAT for a 26-month study of possible mass transportation systems for Pittsburgh. His remarks were much more strongly worded than the final report prepared by his company, which made no definite recommendation either way. Minutes of the closed-door meeting included this account of Douglas' report:

"He stated that while there were advantages in SkyBus

allowing steeper grades and tighter curves and extensive elevated construction, the overall disadvantages of the system prevented PBQD from recommending this technology.

"He noted the lack of a practical switch and the high cost per foot of car in comparison with the longer rapid transit cars in service elsewhere.

"The short SkyBus car required more control and electrical equipment, resulting in greater initial and maintenance costs.

"He stated that operating costs would be higher as it takes more power to operate the rubber tired system. He suggested that all cost comparisons for SkyBus be based on having an attendant on the car as he doubted public and union acceptance of a fully-automated system.

"Mr Douglas recommended to the board that PBQD bring their study to a close at this time and issue a complete report based on a steel wheel, steel rail system which could be used as a plan of reference by the board in future decision making.

"He is unable to find advantages to outweigh the disadvantages of SkyBus. He stated that he could not compromise the facts of this situation."

A demonstration line to Castle Shannon had been suggested, and Douglas said "this would be the best route to move people, if only one route was considered," according to the minutes.

He also recommended further study of a route from Oakland to downtown to the North Side "as basic to an overall system."

In rebuttal, PAT officials downgraded the worth of the statements made by Mr. Douglas in-view of the later report mentioned above that did not take a positive stand in either direction, and noted that the consulting firm had a bias in favor of conventional steel wheel systems, since it was at that time engaged in planning such a system for San Francisco.

(Based on a Pittsburgh Press article).

URBAN DIGEST

■ Recommended reading: The February 1972 issue of the *Western Railroader* has an excellent, full-length article on the former Key System electric railway network in the San Francisco Bay area (abandoned in the early 1960's, and revived in part with the new BART system that will begin operations this year). Copies may be obtained from Post Office Box 668, San Mateo, California 94401. . . ■ People: The able Bernard G. Cunningham has been named to the post of assistant secretary for mass transportation in the new Illinois Department of Transportation (ILLDOT). The new department is an umbrella agency (headed by former Public Works Director William F. Cellini) empowered to plan for Illinois transportation on an intermodal basis.

■ That TACV that Secretary Volpe and Undersecretary Beggs of DOT seem determined to build at all costs (it was shot down in Los Angeles and between Washington and Dulles Airport, among others) has now been "suggested" for the Dallas/Fort Worth-Interregional Airport line. If the two cities can come up with their one-third share of the \$100,000,000 project, it could be operating when or shortly after the new field opens several years from now. A test track, costing about \$15,000,000 would be built first to evaluate various concepts, followed by the finished TACV line, which could operate at speeds of up to 150 mph.

[A comment that can't be resisted from this quarter: I would be interested in knowing just why \$100,000,000 of the taxpayers' money must be spent on yet another untried concept at this stage of the game, when more down to earth nuts and bolts projects desperately need the pitifully small amount of transit funding that Congress, in its wisdom, has seen fit to allocate. I should think that getting to work faster has priority over getting to the airport 10 or 15 minutes quicker. —RRK]

■ Electric transit is alive and well and living everywhere else but in the U.S.: For the record, Brown Boveri has been supplying a successful fully-electronic chopper control for trolley buses to at least one Swiss property since August 1968, bringing the space age to something as mundane as ground transport. Any comments from GE and Westinghouse?? (Noted in *Canadian Coach*)

■ ETIAAWALEEBITUS (II): "Super Trolley" (as newspapers have referred to it), otherwise known as TTC 9213, is currently in revenue service in Calgary, whose transit system has let it be known that the unit's performance may well induce a change of policy *vis-a-vis* the future of the trolley bus in that Alberta city (the future had been somewhat dim, to say the least). The unit has demonstrated in Edmonton (where a heating problem in -40° F cold was located and corrected), and soon goes to Hamilton for further service. . . ■ Rumors as to the impending demise of the trolley coach in Kitchener are false; a report by a diesel-oriented group had been misinterpreted as representing official municipal policy. . . ■ And in Thunder Bay, a full-scale legal campaign is being waged against public officials planning to discard that municipality's electric bus system on grounds of inflexibility (a two-block extension to the Intercity line in the northern area [formerly Port Arthur]: is apparently the only change to the basic network even contemplated at this time). Needless to say, conservationists are opposing the proposed conversion. . . ■ One last note about Edmonton: the transit system in that city has opted for the purchase of a Flyer E-700A for testing purposes of its own.

■ Detroit's Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMATA) has apparently been successful in its takeover of the trouble-plagued Lake Shore Coach Lines (operating services to the 5 Grosse Pointes and St. Clair Shores). The operation is in the black for the first time in many months, equipment has been spruced up (with new and re-conditioned coaches added), and service has been improved. In addition, for the first time in the 40-year history of the operation, public timetables have been issued for the various services operated by SEMATA/LSCL.

■ Muskegon, Michigan has lost its city bus service, as we noted here last week; the final runs were completed on February 20. The ten TC-29 Twin Coaches and two older school buses are up for sale. . . . Mayor Daley has joined the many public officials coming out for subsidization of operating losses for the nation's transit systems from federal funds; the mayor testified at a House hearing considering the subsidies.

■ St. Louis' Bi-State Transit is rapidly running out of operating capital, and plans to effect drastic economies this summer, possibly even a total shutdown. UMTA has warned local authorities that it will withhold funds for the region's planned rapid transit system unless area officials make a concerted effort to save the bus system.

■ The Greater Peoria Mass Transit District is actively considering increasing its advertising budget from \$12,000 to \$25,000 this year (this *is* news). . . . Metro Toronto taxpayers subsidize TTC riders to the tune of 8¢ each per ride, according to Metro Chairman Albert Campbell. . . . After transit service in Kingston, Ontario was cut back last year in an effort to decrease costs, the public utilities commission found that decreased riding *increased* the commission net deficit for the year.

railway report

A CHANGE AT LAST

■ This time, it is apparently for real—Central Station on Chicago's lakefront is closing for good. After many false alarms, AMTRAK has finally announced that it is moving its three remaining pairs of trains from the storied Illinois Central Chicago terminal to Union Station, to join the rest of NRPC's Windy City runs.

Trains 50/51 (the *George Washington/James Whitcomb Riley*), 58/59 (the *Panama Limited*) and 392/392 (the *Shawnee*) will operate into Union Station, starting Monday, March 6. At the same time, the Corporation announced that the so-called *Campus* services (Chicago to Champaign on Fridays and Sundays), will be discontinued after their runs of the March 4-5 weekend.

The schedules for the affected trains will be changed in several respects, including adjusting the times departing from and arriving in Chicago itself. For example, the *Panama* will leave Chicago at 4:15 PM (changed from a Central departure of 5:00 PM), and arrive at 10:10 AM (from 9:30). The *Riley/Washington* will now leave at 1:50 PM (from 3:40), arriving Cincinnati at the same time as before (a lengthening of the schedule by 1:50); in the reverse direction, departure time from Cincinnati will be the same, but arrival in Chicago is scheduled for 2:55, for a 1:40 lengthening of the running time.

The northbound *Shawnee* will now arrive at 9:50 (formerly 9:30); the southbound run will depart Union at 9:00 AM (old time 8:30), and arrive in Carbondale at 2:50 PM.

The final closure of the historic station ends some 79 years of service for the old depot.

■ The 1941 *LOCOMOTIVE CYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN PRACTICE* has been reissued by Kalmbach Publications; the book is available at bookstores or hobby shops at \$40. . . . Santa Fe has begun repair of AMTRAK passenger equipment at its Topeka shops. . . . The Turbo Train broke down shortly after being placed on the Parkersburg run and had to be assisted by a diesel unit; it subsequently derailed when the adapter coupler necessary to hook the Turbo up to conventional equipment fell off and dropped onto the rail.

■ A challenge to the constitutionality of the AMTRAK Act was denied a hearing by the U.S. Supreme Court last week. The case involved, oddly enough, the Chicago to Quincy run dropped by the Burlington Northern a week after the advent of AMTRAK last May, but subsequently restored with the help of Illinois funds.

■ The Canadian government is considering the advisability of subsidizing a return to the rails of the CN's five TurboTrains, out of service as the result of a variety of ills. The five seven-car sets, run between Toronto and Montreal, began operation in December 1968, but have been in and out of service since then, and have not run at all since last year. According to sources in Ottawa, the government will assist United Aircraft and the CN to prepare the trains for service again, on the theory that the developmental costs thus far justify the new expenditures.

■ CP Rail is upping fares on its Montreal-St. John (New Brunswick) passenger services. The road has placed in effect a general 10% fare hike for most of the rest of its Canadian services. . . . A go-ahead is expected in April for the long-dreamed-of English Channel tunnel; the tubes (twin) will extend for 35 miles (the longest tunnel in the world) between Sangatte, France and Folkestone, England. Rails would be laid in the tunnel, which would not accommodate automobiles. These and travelers would be carried in double-deck trains, which in part would be through routed between English and Continental points.

airline action

JET JOTTINGS

■ A bill giving the CAB authority over air fares on foreign flights to and from the U.S. was passed by the Senate last week. The action is aimed at protecting U.S. carriers from "cut-throat" competition by foreign carriers in the wake of the air fare "war" begun last summer. . . . Laker Airways of Great Britain is purchasing two more DC-10s; the carrier specializes in charter work. . . . That U.S. SST mockup, worth \$10,700,000, went for \$31,119 in an auction last week. The buyer plans to enshrine the 220-foot, one-winged mockup on Utah's Salt Flats, in conjunction with a racing hall of fame they plan to build there.

■ British Caledonian Airways, Ltd., has received permission from the British Air Transport Licencing Board to make scheduled transatlantic flights to New York, Los Angeles and Chicago in competition with state-owned BOAC. BCA was formed through the merger of British United and Caledonian Airways, both private carriers with routes to and from the Continent, as well as charter service.



ABOVE: Electric transit is alive and well and living in Toronto; refurbished PCC 4362 (TC 21 FEB 72) poses on a cold, crisp 1972 Sunday at the City Hall loop. **BELOW:** The clock has run out on transit in Muskegon—and, for that matter, all of Michigan. This is one of the last wintry downtown lineups of the MTA. —Both, **Richard R. Kunz.**



bus briefs

HIGHWAY HAPPENINGS



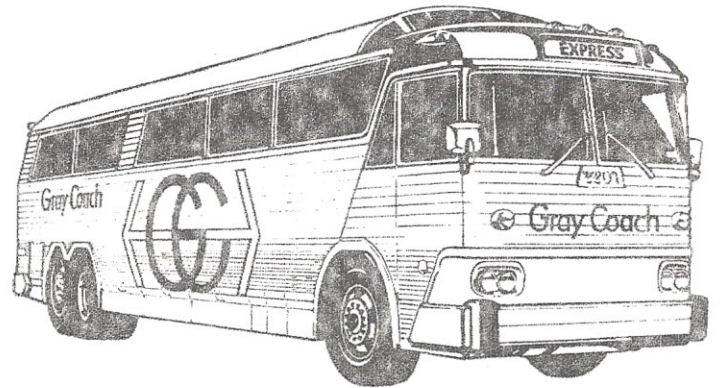
■ Out with the old: The historic Gray Coach Lines emblem pictured at the left is no more; also retired is the traditional gray-green color scheme of the Toronto-based company.

In an effort to upgrade the image of TTC's wholly-owned subsidiary, the company has adopted the striking new logo and exterior livery shown at the right. Dubbed the "White Wonders" by Toronto observers, newly-liveried Gray Coach units are painted entirely in white—even to the extent of covering over chrome around marker and headlights. All new equipment currently on order and being delivered is so being painted, and present units will receive the new colors when being shopped for any reason. Regardless of the merits of the argument that such a livery is extremely difficult to see in the snowstorms for which the province of Ontario is justly famed, it *is* at least distinctive.

■ In the wake of the discontinuance of all service formerly operated by the now-bankrupt Ohio Bus Lines, two other carriers have stepped in to fill the breach. Greyhound Lines—East is now operating daily service between Cincinnati and Richmond (Indiana) via Hamilton, Millville, Oxford and College Corner; intrastate service between College Corner and Richmond, and service between Dayton and Richmond.

■ At the same time, Roland St. John's Megacity Transit Lines is now operating Ohio intrastate service daily between Cincinnati, Hamilton and Oxford, and one round-trip Monday thru Friday between Cincinnati and Lebanon (Ohio) via Sharonville.

■ Crown Transit Lines (based in Springfield, Illinois) has begun operation of weekend special service between Western Illinois University in Macomb and Peoria, operating on Fridays and Sundays only. . . . ■ On March 1, Wisconsin-Michigan Coaches begins a deluxe service operating between Milwaukee and Green Bay. WMC will provide deluxe seating, reservations, hostesses, light snacks and beverages on the run.



Gray Coach

nautical notes

SAILING INTO THE SUNSET

■ With the arrival in Yokohama February 8, and Kobe on February 11, Mitsui OSK Lines' passenger vessel *Argentina Maru* completed her service in liner operations. She will be refurbished, renamed the *Nippon Maru*, and enter cruise service to and from Japan. Built in 1958, the Japanese vessel is capable of speeds of 20-knots and she carries 375 passengers in Cabin and Economy classes. Her sister ship, the *Brazil Maru*, continues on the liner route between Japan, California and the east coast of South America via the Panama Canal for four more voyages, but she too will begin cruise service in late 1973. Mitsui OSK is the only Japanese-flag steamship company with liner passenger service. Like other carriers, MOL is faced with increasing costs and decreasing passenger business, and believes the cruise business will be more lucrative, filling a growing market in Japan. (Noted by correspondent Raymond P. DeGroot, Jr.)

cover story

COMMUTING: A RAIL RENAISSANCE?

[Editor's Note: With the ecological movement gaining momentum, it is beginning to appear that a great deal of support is being mustered for restoration of no-longer-operated rail commuter services, and expansion of existing ones; it is this area that will be examined in a continuing TC series. We will first look at Pittsburgh, where a viable alternative and supplement to the controversial Port Authority Early Action Program was first proposed by Allegheny County minority commissioner Dr. William R. Hunt in 1970. This beginning is particularly appropriate because the Port Authority has just this past week begun negotiations in earnest aimed at restructuring and expansion of the present Baltimore & Ohio Railroad commuter service to Versailles.]

Allegheny County is very fortunate to have an extensive railroad network within its boundaries. These rail lines, built up by many railroad companies over the years to serve local coal and steel industries, penetrate most areas of the county. There is some thought that the Port Authority's proposed solutions to the problem of transit in the county could make use of this vast network of existing, usable private rights-of-way rail lines.

By utilizing the existing network of rail lines to its fullest extent, one can provide a grade-separated, fast transit service to almost every community on or near a railroad line. Since the rights-of-way, rails and equipment are already extant, fixed facility costs are extremely low, consisting only of parking spaces at the stations and platforms where none presently exist. It has been proven in other cities that people will ride such service rather than drive. With these considerations in mind, it would seem that the re-initiation of commuter railroad service in Allegheny County could make a definite contribution to solving Allegheny County's transportation problem.

MAIN LINE TRACKAGE--PENN CENTRAL

The Penn Central maintains by far the largest amount of rail trackage in the Allegheny County area. These main lines still carry passenger service consisting of the Penn Central's main line intercity trains between Columbus, Philadelphia and Chicago.

The Chicago main line runs along the north bank of the Ohio and passes through North Side, Woods Run, Avalon, Bellevue, Ben Avon, Emsworth, Sewickley and Ambridge. Trains presently stop only at Sewickley, and the running time between Pittsburgh and Sewickley is only 18 minutes.

The Columbus main line passes through Corliss, Ingram, Crafton, Carnegie, Oakdale and McDonald, and trains presently using this line make no stops in Allegheny County.

The East Line to Philadelphia is perhaps the most interesting of all, as it passes thru some of the most densely populated and highly industrialized areas of Allegheny County. The communities of Bloomfield, Shadyside, Point Breeze, East Liberty, Homewood/Brushton, Wilkinsburg, Edgewood, Swissvale, Rankin, Braddock, East Pittsburgh, Turtle Creek, Wilmerding and Trafford all line along this line, with easy connections possible to Monroeville, Forest Hills, Squirrel Hill and Oakland without difficulty. Currently, only one stop is made by mainline trains--at Wilkinsburg; running time is 13 minutes to Pittsburgh. *(To be continued).*

COLUMN ONE|CONTINUED

ter of a full meal being served as we sat on the windy taxiway. But the wait also presented this reporter with the rare opportunity of being able to view in detail the cockpit of a 737, all the while conversing with pilot and copilot. (One comment from the copilot, when asked his impression of the 737: "Put a couple of machine guns on the wings, and I'd be happy to take it into combat"). Both pilot and copilot (and the rest of the crew) made the best of a bad situation; and the "open house" held in the cockpit during those long hours on the ground served to render the long wait at least bearable.

At length (great length), we were able to bully our way onto the runway (the West Indian voice of a BWIA pilot requesting permission to start engines--right in front of us--served to alert the supervisory forces manning the tower of our presence) and take off, and the gentle thrust of gravity never felt better.

It all served to remind me of somewhat similar "harassment" suffered on what turned out to be a rather abortive trip to Europe in May 1968 (the year virtually all of France was shut down by the general unrest precipitated by students; remember?), when a seat I managed to wangle on a Sabena flight out of Brussels filled me with the kind of grateful emotion I would imagine the children of Moses felt when the Red Sea parted.

Once again, then, the lesson is brought home: transport facilities are nothing less than absolutely vital in this sophisticated age, and when they are taken from us, we do suffer from their loss. In that respect, at any rate, the flight controllers made their point.

—Richard R. Kunz