Transit Talk
VOL. 16

Articulated Trolleybuses Soon to Roll Off Assembly Lines in Winnipeg

On January 28, 2007, Canada's first articulated trolleybus arrived at Vancouver's Oakridge Transit Centre. Unit 2501 is the prototype of 40 such high capacity trolleybuses on order for the West Coast city. Once testing of the prototype unit has been completed, the assembly of the remaining 39 vehicles will begin at New Flyer's bus manufacturing plant in Winnipeg. The articulated trolleybuses will serve Vancouver's heaviest routes and are part of an order of 228 non-polluting trolley vehicles. Over 50 new 40-foot (non-articulated) trolleybuses by the same manufacturer are already in service there. [International Trolleybus News, Jan. 29, 2007]

The New Flyer-Kiepe prototype articulated trolleybus now rolls along the streets of Vancouver. [Photo: D. Lam]

Seattle Plans Trolley Expansion

Seattle's King County Metro Transit is planning to extend that city's electric trolleybus system to serve light rail stations on Sound Transit's LINK light rail line, currently under construction. Two route extensions are planned for the near term: Wires on route 14 will be extended to connect with the Mt. Baker/McClellan Street Station, and route 36 will be extended to the Othello Street Station. A third extension on route 7 to Rainier Beach is under consideration. The first two extensions would be built in phases during 2007 and 2008, with the third extension to be considered for implementation after the start-up of light rail service in 2009. Public consultation on the extensions is now underway. [King County Metro News, March 19, 2007]

Canadian Cities want National Transit Plan

Toronto Mayor David Miller, Montreal Mayor Gerald Tremblay and Edmonton City Councillor Karen Leibovici took to the podium in Montreal on March 5th, calling on the Federal Government to provide a stable source of funding for urban transit systems. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) News Conference heard that at least $2 billion a year in permanent funding is needed to upgrade and expand urban transit systems. Canada is the only member of the G8 that does not have a national transit strategy.

"We don't have the [financial] capacity to expand our transit systems," Miller said, "we don't even have enough money to keep them going." Leibovici described public transit as the "lifeblood of our cities", and cited a Canadian Urban Transit (con't)

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News Bulletin of the Edmonton Trolley Coalition
Sustainable Transit for Liveable Communities
www.trolleycoalition.org
Edited by Robert R. Clark, retired supervisor of transit planning

Canadian Cities want National Transit Plan (con't from page 1)

Association (CUTA) report that showed $20.7 billion for infrastructure will be needed over the next four years.

Miller said that federal and provincial governments in Canada are "a little bit behind the people." "The people are ready," he said, indicating the country's large urban transit networks are pressed to meet demand. "A legislated, permanent fund" is what is needed to meet the needs of transit in cities.

The FCM representatives put transit forward as a strategy to deal with climate change, reduce the environmental impacts of transportation, improve quality of life and maintain a healthy economy. The Toronto Board of Trade, for instance, has estimated that $2 billion a year is lost because of traffic congestion in that city alone. Montreal Mayor Gerald Tremblay said "public transit is a necessary part of the urban landscape; we don't have a choice".

The FCM announcement came just as the Federal Government was about to announce funding for the expansion of Toronto's subway system. Toronto area New Democrat MP Peggy Nash had presented a private members bill calling for a national transit strategy in September of 2006. "We have the money at the federal level to make a real difference", she commented, "it's time we got serious on this." [National Post, March 5, 2007; Canadian Press, March 6, 2007]

Local Developer honoured with Better Transit Award

Three years ago, Edmonton's transit advocacy group *Citizens for Better Transit*, in partnership with the *ETS Advisory Board*, launched an award to recognize citizens who have made significant contributions to the improvement of public transit. Named after former city councillor and transit advocate Professor Gerry Wright, the annual award is sponsored by *Siemens Canada* and the *Amalgamated Transit Union Local 569*.

Presented March 10th at the ETS Community Conference, the 2007 award recognizes the contributions of local developer and transit advocate J. A. (Jim) Brown. Brown has been involved in the land development scene in Edmonton since 1973, and is currently active with the Urban Development Institute (UDI) and as President of his own company, Sherrick Management Ltd.

In 1991, Brown made a commitment to fund 50% of the operating cost of transit service for 18 months for the community of Wild Rose, initiating Edmonton's *Developer Funded Transit Program*. Over the years, Brown has secured the participation of other land developers and succeeded in creating a "transit friendly" environment in new communities. Through his efforts, the *Developer Funded Transit Program* has been expanded and modified such that developers now cover 100% of the operating cost of peak hour transit service for two years. Wild Rose, The Grange, Blackmud Creek, Rutherford and Hamptons are just some communities that have benefited from the program.

The program has helped to boost transit use in new communities by putting bus service in place before new residents make the move to acquire second cars. [Citizens for Better Transit, Mar. 10, 2007]

Mr. Jim Brown (left) receives the Gerry Wright Better Transit Award. Presenters are left to right: Mr. del Rosario (Siemens), Mr. Chahal (ATU 569), Ms. Gray (ETS Advisory Board), Ms. Gillett (Citizens f. Better Transit) [Courtesy ETS]

Western Canadian Transit News Items

Calgary Transit hit by ridership spike

Transit ridership in Calgary jumped by almost 10% in 2006 to over 90 million rides. While ridership growth is happening in many major North American cities, Calgary's increase is more than twice what was anticipated. Over 30,000 more people are now riding the C-Train each day than in 2005. Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier referred to the increase as "just part of the growth pressures occurring everywhere in Calgary". The system is actually over capacity and urgently needs more investment to be able to meet demand. "It's awful," said Pat Couture, an employee at the Calgary Board of Education, of the packed LRT cars she rides to and from work each day. But while she does not like the packed trains, Couture admits she does enjoy speeding past cars crawling along in dense traffic.

To help cope, Calgary Transit has ordered more LRT cars and 43 new buses, including some articulated units. In total 36 new LRT cars are expected in 2007. As well, transit is looking for up to 130 new drivers as well as more staff to service equipment. 129,000 new transit service hours will be added this year to help meet demand.

These improvements won't likely be enough, though. "We've run out of capital funding," said Alderman Druh Farrell, voicing concerns about money that is going into roadway interchanges instead of transit. She said transit is the only issue where her constituents encourage her to spend more money. "I imagine we'd be able to get a lot more ridership if the system was better funded," she stated. "We should do everything we can to increase capacity." [Calgary Herald, Jan. 20, 2007]

Victoria B.C. to get Bus Lanes on Douglas Street

Victoria's main street, Douglas Street, is about to be hit with a big change. It is a change that will reshape the way Victoria's transit system works as well as the way automobile drivers use the thoroughfare. B.C. Transit has been given more than $5 million in Federal gas tax money to build 2.2 km of dedicated bus lanes along the centre of Douglas Street. The buses would also have priority at traffic lights, allowing them to maintain a speed of about 50 km/h, even in rush hour. The needed space for the bus lanes will be garnered by removing curbside parking stalls.

The plan won't please everyone, especially drivers stuck in traffic who will see buses whizzing past. But it will make riding the bus much more appealing to the public, and will give a hint of what to expect if light rail is one day built along Douglas Street. [Victoria Times Colonist, February 26, 2007]

Mendoza to buy used Vancouver trolleybuses

They may have racked up millions of miles and be considered worn-out by Canadian standards, but Vancouver's 25-year old trolleybuses appear destined for a second life in Mendoza, Argentina, according to the Argentine newspaper *Uno.* Once Vancouver's new fleet of trolleys is in place, 100 of the retired vehicles may wind up doing further service in Mendoza. The price - $1,000 a piece. Mendoza considers them a bargain compared with new Brazilian-made trolleys costing upwards of $300,000. And although dated, the technology in these vehicles is much more modern than what is in Mendoza's current fleet, according to transport director Rodriguez.

With the hundred ex-Vancouver trolleys, Mendoza hopes not only to cover the current demand for electric vehicles, but also to extend some of its trolley lines to serve new areas.

Mendoza currently operates a fleet of 60 trolleybuses.

The nearby city of Rosario is reportedly also interested in purchasing used trolleybuses from Vancouver. For decades, trolleybuses have been known for their longevity, and second-hand units from a number of North American cities have wound up doing further service elsewhere. [International Trolleybus News/Luis de la Fuente, Jan. 23, 2007]

Environmental News

Hybrid Bus Tests reveal higher emissions than Conventional Diesel Buses

Hybrid buses are being touted as being 'cleaner' than conventional diesels and well-suited to stop-and-go operation. However, recent emission tests on hybrid buses done at the University of Connecticut came up with the opposite finding.

Researchers tested the emissions from two hybrid buses equipped with 280 hp Cummins ISL diesel engines and the Allison parallel Electric Drive System, and compared them to those produced by two conventional diesel buses equipped with engines of the same horsepower. Tests measured the number of particles produced, not the mass (weight), as the number of particles is a better determinant of the diesel's adverse effects on human health.

During freeway operation, the hybrid vehicles produced, on average, 10% less particle emissions than the conventional diesel buses. However, during stop-and-go operation, the mean particle emissions of the hybrid bus were 29% higher than conventional diesel.
[www.engr.uconn.edu/~baholmen/docs/AAAR04_DavilaHolmen.pdf, accessed Feb. 7, 2007]

Traffic Fumes impair Lung Development in Children – Study

A large-scale study in California found that 10-year olds who lived within 500 metres of a roadway suffered a "substantial" loss of lung function by the age of 18. The effect decreased, the further away a child lived from the road.

A similar impact was seen in both boys and girls, and there was little influence from social background, other pollution sources or exposure to tobacco smoke.

Between the ages of 10 and 18, a period of rapid lung growth occurs. The extent of the growth can be measured by the amount of air a child can blow into a tube. Compared with children living 1,500 metres from the roadway, children living closer to the road had less "puff" by the age of 18. Children living 500 metres or less from the road exhibited on average a 3-7% loss in lung function, but individual children showed deficits of up to 10%.

The scientists said their findings pointed to diesel exhaust as being a prime culprit.
[Yahoo News, January 26, 2007]

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposes to cut Diesel Exhaust from Ships, Boats and Trains

On Friday, March 2nd, EPA administrator Stephen Johnson announced proposed new emission standards for diesel locomotive engines, tugs, barges, ferries and recreational marine engines. The toxic chemicals and soot in diesel exhaust contribute to smog and cause cancer. The standards, when adopted and fully phased in, would reduce particulate pollution and smog forming nitrogen oxides from these engines. The standards will not only apply to new vehicles, but also to rebuilt ones. The standards for rebuilt trains would apply as early as next year, while those for new locomotive and marine diesel engines will be phased in starting in 2009. The new pollution requirements will cost an additional $600 million between now and 2030, but will provide approximately $12 billion in benefits over the same time period, including 1,500 fewer premature deaths, 1,100 fewer hospitalizations and 170,000 more work days.

Bill Becker of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies equated the benefits to taking 750,000 diesel trucks off the road. [Associated Press, March 2, 2007]

International News

Chinese cities can't get enough new trolleybuses

Beijing's newest trolleys from Neoplan of China [Liu Shuang]

By the end of last year, China's two biggest cities had each taken delivery of new trolleybuses to boost capacity in anticipation of growing ridership. Shanghai took delivery of 30 40-foot HOA branded trolleys made in nearby Hangzhou, and Beijing took delivery of part of an order of 100 Young-MAN-Neoplan trolleys. The Neoplan model is reputed to be the most advanced trolleybus ever produced in China, and is the product of three well-known companies in the Chinese rail and bus industry. [International Trolleybus News/Liu Shuang, January 28, 2007]

Lucerne to put MegaTrolleys into Service

The Transit Authority of Lucerne, Switzerland plans to take into service a number of new 24-metre (80 foot) double-articulated trolleybuses manufactured by Hess/Vossloh-Kiepe. The "mega trolleys" can accommodate up to 200 passengers and have two drive axles. The "mega trolleys" are to enter service this June. [Vossloh-Kiepe, January 17, 2007]

Zurich orders more Swisstrolleys

In order to increase service on Zurich's Route 32, the operator has added two more trolleybuses to its order of July 2005 from manufacturer Swisstrolley, bringing the total order to 18 vehicles. Delivery of the order is currently underway at a rate of 2 per month, and all vehicles will be in place by summer of this year. [International Trolleybus News, Feb. 5, 2007]

Diesel Rail option rejected in Adelaide Transit Study

A government report commissioned for Adelaide Australia revealed that an overhaul of the city's transit system needed to meet the goal of doubling transit use by 2018 could cost up to $2 billion. The report considered several options, including expanding diesel train services, converting to electric light rail, and not expanding rail but instead increasing bus services. The report rejects expanding diesel rail services outright because diesel rail is not seen as being able to provide the market edge to attract the required number of passengers away from cars and achieve targets in the most cost effective, safe and robust way. Instead, it recommends conversion to an electric system, stating that the cost of conversion would be recovered by savings in energy, maintenance, future vehicle purchase cost and additional fare revenue. [The Advertiser, March 2, 2007]

Columbus Ohio streetcar resurrection plan comes with big benefits

Minus a large public outcry or some other catastrophe, downtown Columbus Ohio is likely to get a modern streetcar system within a decade, according to the latest update from that city's Downtown Streetcar Working Group (DSWG).

While streetcars have been criticized as inflexible and expensive, the working group has identified major benefits that they would bring to the 80,000 people living or working in downtown neighborhoods. While buses can change routes and negotiate obstacles, says the DSWG, this can lead to problems when routes get so twisted that riders become confused. Streetcars offer high visibility and their routings are usually straightforward.

(con't)

Moreover, the streetcars would help spur growth and development in the downtown area, and help to integrate neighborhoods undergoing redevelopment. The DSWG estimated that within five years, three streetcar routes would create between $674 and 764 million of economic development within one block of the tracks. This would produce a return of approximately 500%, or $5 of economic growth for every dollar spent on the streetcar system. Even if only a fraction of this were to materialize, it is still significant enough not to ignore. [The Lantern/U-Wire, Jan. 23, 2007]

Cincinnati studies streetcars

The city of Cincinnati, Ohio has selected a consultant to study the idea of using streetcars to link its riverfront and downtown business districts with adjoining neighborhoods. The study will examine possible alignments and review projected construction costs, operating costs and ridership forecasts as well as estimated economic development benefits. In addition to providing an alternative means of transit and mobility, streetcar systems are now widely recognized for their contribution to local economies and their ability to promote economic and community development in specific corridors. [Mass Transit Magazine, Jan. 31, 2007]

Russian Company lends hand to meet dire need for trolleybuses

The Russian company Gorelektrotrans has begun assembling trolleybuses for the Belorussian bus manufacturer Belkommunmash in the Russian town of Barnaul. Component parts manufactured by Belkommunmash are delivered to the Russian town for assembly by local employees. The move will help speed the delivery of new trolleybuses to Barnaul, while reducing shipping costs. Barnaul alone has a dire need for 60 new trolleybuses, while other municipalities in the area are reportedly also in need of new vehicles. [International Trolleybus News, March 26 2007]

Trolleybuses to return to Slovakian city of Banska Bystrica

After the closure of their trolleybus system sixteen months ago, residents of the Slovakian city of Banska Bystrica will awaken to the silent service once again on April 30th. The city operated 9 trolleybus routes prior to the system's closure, using approximately 30 vehicles. The trolley system was closed by the previous local government based on economic claims, however a newly elected government, recognizing its benefits, voted to reinstate the service. [International Trolleybus News, Mar. 19, 2007]

Skoda Electric wins one of the biggest trolleybus contracts in Europe

Skoda Electric, manufacturer of electric propulsion equipment, has been awarded one of Europe's largest contracts for the supply of electric trolleybuses. The contract entails the supply of 150 new 40-foot low floor trolleybuses to the city of Riga in Latvia. The vehicles will be equipped with air conditioning, a ramp for disabled access, and automatic current collectors which can be retracted by the driver from inside the coach. The delivery of the new vehicles will take place between 2007 and 2011. Skoda will partner with Irisbus in the manufacture of the vehicles.

The city of Riga operates around 300 trolleybuses. [Skoda Holdings, Plzen, Feb. 9, 2007]

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Earth Day 2007

April 22, Hawrelak Park