

TRIANGLE COMMUTER NEWS

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Ridesharing? Call 471-POOL



Jitney Service Emerges From the Shadows

Pittsburgh's phantom fleet — the estimated 500 to 1,000 jitneys, or unlicensed taxis which serve the city's predominantly black neighborhoods — has taken a giant step toward visibility. After two years and a long succession of hearings, a January ruling by the Public Utilities Commission approved an application by jitney driver Curtis B. McCoy to operate his cab service as UJSP Independent Taxi. The PUC, a state agency which licenses taxi companies to operate in Pennsylvania, had fined McCoy \$300 in 1993 for operating a jitney. Although illegal, jitney service in Pittsburgh has been an open secret since at least World War II.

A series of articles in the Post-Gazette last fall divided jitney service into three general types. The "line haul" jitneys, which

typically use full-size American cars, follow Fifth Avenue into the Golden Triangle. Two quick taps on the car's horn announce it as a jitney in areas near PAT bus stops along the way. The newspaper story reported that fares on most jitneys are similar to PAT's one-zone bus fare, \$1.25. Port Authority has had some concern in areas where jitneys operate on routings similar to regularly scheduled PAT bus routes.

In addition to the line-haul jitneys, there are an estimated 100 jitney stations, at various locations, where drivers wait for walk-up customers or for calls, which are sometimes directed to nearby pay phones. The third variation, according to Post-Gazette reporter Bill Steigerwald, is the supermarket jitney. These cars work out of

major grocery stores in city neighborhoods such as Oakland and Mt. Washington. Their rate structures are informal, but fares are generally negotiated ahead of time and related to the length of the trip.

Licensed taxi service in Pittsburgh — which according to the International Taxicab and Livery Association factbook is more expensive than in most comparable U.S. cities — is concentrated in the downtown-to-airport corridor. Very few cabs operate in the city's suburbs. On most weekdays, about 50 of the 135 Yellow Cab taxis that normally operate can be found at Pittsburgh International Airport. Of the company's 250 cab fleet, it is unusual to have more than 70 or 80 on the street at any one time, according to the newspaper report. ▲

Bell-Atlantic is Getting Serious About Telecommuting

Bell-Atlantic, which already provides local telephone service to more than 70% of the households in Pennsylvania, wants to reach out and touch you where you work. The company has set its sights on transforming telecommuting — a quiltwork of strategies that allow employees to work outside of traditional offices and communicate with one another electronically — from the haphazard practice it is today into a far more powerful option for employers as they prepare their workforce for the 21st century. Moreover, the company is determined to begin making its mark this year.

Bell-Atlantic's challenge has both technical and human aspects. At a minimum, it requires flawlessly moving huge volumes of digital data from one site to another, regardless of which telephone companies and which makes of equipment are involved in those transmissions. And it requires the company to do so at a price which will attract and retain prospective users. But it also requires employers, as

well as the suppliers of telecommunication services, to understand at a deeper level how transforming the workplace into a virtual community will affect such key variables as work quality, work pace, and the management of personnel.

However a series of Bell-Atlantic initiatives now underway promises to address those issues squarely before the end of 1995. For example, a chain of corporate alliances involving the suppliers of interrelated components and services is now being assembled to meet the hardware and software needs of a comprehensive telecommuting program. Research is underway to profile employee groups which are ripe for telecommuting. And at Washington's Georgetown University, a company-sponsored study of the human factors associated with working in cyberspace began earlier this month.

With its expanded technical arsenal and a more profound understanding of how to make it work effectively, Bell-Atlantic is

prepared to sell telecommuting as a viable alternative to the traditional work site. Companies which are considering expansion or relocation to accommodate staff growth will be prime targets for Bell-Atlantic's sales efforts. Information workers, particularly "power users," whose work product is already computer-intensive, are also key prospects. And satellite work centers, fitted out with state-of-the-art teleconferencing and telecommunications equipment, figure into the company's thinking as well.

Telecommuting has been identified as one of a handful of transportation management strategies in SPRPC's 2015 comprehensive long-range plan which could help to reduce the volume of traffic along the region's key corridors. An SPRPC seminar directed to human resource managers based in downtown Pittsburgh is being planned for late spring. Telecommuting as well as other non-traditional alternatives to solo driving will be featured. ▲



City Parking Authority Recalibrates Its Parking Rates

A restructured parking rate schedule which had been slated to take effect on January 1 came under sharp attack from a number of directions before it could be fully implemented. The hostile reception to increases in all-day parking fees at the Public Parking Authority's city-owned lots and garages, forced a scale-back of the increases, which originally ranged as high as \$3.00 above their 1994 levels. But the problem that prompted the Authority to restructure its charges — the lack of short-term downtown parking from mid-morning until early afternoon — remains unresolved.

"Most of our garages were filling up between 8:30 and 9:00 AM," according to Parking Authority Executive Director Guy Costa. "A big complaint we've been getting from a lot of the merchants and other businesses in downtown Pittsburgh

is that there was nowhere to park if someone wanted to come in for shopping or business. We also found out that 42% of our spaces downtown are leased.

"What we tried to do with our rate restructuring was to discourage all-day parkers. We were hoping that the all-day commuter would park in the fringe areas like the Strip District, the Stadium, or Station Square, and that they would do more vanpooling, carpooling, or take public transportation. That way they're freeing up more parking spaces for the short-term parker."

Although the Authority's all-day rate increases were scaled back from what it had initially proposed, other aspects of the new rate structure did go into effect as scheduled. The rates for short-term parking — under four hours — were actually reduced. And a plan to allow the proportion of leased spaces to decline to

25% of the total is also in place.

A series of articles which ran in the Post-Gazette last fall compared the cost and availability of Pittsburgh's downtown parking to that in other cities. It concluded that Pittsburgh parking spaces were generally more expensive and less available than those in most comparable central business districts. But there are important differences too, according to Mr. Costa.

"Pittsburgh is different because our terrain is defined by the rivers. Indianapolis and Cleveland and Columbus and Houston are spread out and have more vacant areas for cheap parking. If our rivers were parking lots, parking here would be cheap too," he said. "We're just a real small downtown. But if you go out as far as the Strip District, there are about 2,000 parking spaces available and 2,000 more at the stadium. So there is fringe parking out there." ▲

Spine Line Corridor Needs, Suggestions Probed At Public Meetings

Potential improvements along Pittsburgh's "Spine Line" — a loosely defined transportation corridor linking Oakland, downtown, and the near North Side — were presented at a series of four scoping meetings sponsored by SPRPC and Port Authority Transit during late January and early February. A major transportation project following the east-west Spine Line corridor is included in SPRPC's long-range transportation plan, which the agency adopted last September.

Under the 1991 federal surface transportation act, ISTEA, transit solutions to mobility problems are strongly encouraged in urban areas, particularly those with air quality problems. The act also requires metropolitan planning organizations to undertake detailed studies to identify these solutions. Public input plays an important role in those studies, which are used to define and justify federally-financed transportation projects. Scoping meetings offer a forum for residents to express their views on mobility problems and hear their suggested solutions. More than 250 people attended the four initial Spine Line community meetings.

Although Spine Line has frequently been characterized as a light rail transit project,

the study is also open to other options, according to SPRPC Executive Director Robert Kochanowski. "We're considering busways, transportation system management measures, and the no-build option, as well as LRT," he said. But deciding what to build and where to build it cannot occur until a number of intermediate steps are taken. Collecting and analyzing information on the needs, concerns and desires of the people who would be most directly affected by the service is a required step, regardless of the project's final form.

The cost of building Spine Line as a 7.1 mile LRT system — which is estimated in SPRPC's long-range transportation plan at \$1.47 billion in 1993 dollars — make it the plan's most expensive transportation project.

For the time being, at least, SPRPC, PAT and their outside consultants are busy analyzing the data they collected at the four public meetings. Ideas worthy of additional research are being identified, innovative route suggestions are being considered, and comments are being categorized for further scrutiny.

"There was no clear consensus. It was all across the board," PAT public affairs

manager Judi McNeil reported. "But what we heard clearly was that people want to see improvements. They feel they've been delayed too long and they're really anxious to move forward." ▲

Spine Line Community Workshops Scheduled

Three neighborhood-specific planning workshops will examine community transportation needs and consider solutions suggested at the joint PAT-SPRPC Spine Line scoping meetings held in January and February. The second wave of meetings will take place later this month. Call 322-6000 for more information.

Oakland. Monday, March 27, 7:30-9:30PM Kurtzman Room, William Pitt Student Union, University Pittsburgh, Fifth & Bigelow

Hill District. Wednesday, March 29, 7:00-9:00PM Hill House Auditorium, 1835 Centre

Downtown/North Side. Thursday, March 30, 7:00-9:00PM King Elementary School Library, 50 Montgomery Place



Detours, Delays And Diversions

Motorists should be prepared to dance the orange barrel polka once again as a long series of projects involving the region's roads, bridges and interchanges kicks off the spring construction season. Key projects include:

Route 8. New left turn lanes will be added to Rt. 8 at Elfinwild and Kleber Roads in Hampton and Shaler townships. During their year-long construction, traffic flow will be restricted to one lane in each direction.

Smithfield Street Bridge. Rebuilt and reopened last fall, the bridge will close again as paint removal and repainting of the landmark structure begin around April 1. During the three-month long project, PennDOT hopes to keep one traffic lane open — inbound in the

morning, outbound in the afternoons.

Allegheny Valley Expressway. The replacement of five separate bridge decks along Rt. 28 between the Highland Park Bridge and the Blawnox exit will create a variety of lane restrictions and traffic crossovers until work is completed around Thanksgiving.

McKnight Road. A year-long resurfacing project along a two-mile stretch of McKnight through Ross Township will restrict traffic to one lane in each direction.

Lebanon Church Road. Resurfacing and the construction of three new left turn lanes will restrict traffic along Rt. 885 in West Mifflin to one lane in each direction through the end of the 1996 construction season.

Ohio River Blvd. Two road widening projects along Rt. 65 in Edgeworth and in Pittsburgh, will restrict traffic to one lane in each direction for the year and a half that work is underway.

I-79. The northern junction of I-70 with I-79 will be rebuilt together with connecting roadways and bridges in a two-year project. Traffic plans are not yet set, but they could involve redirecting southbound I-79 traffic onto I-70 west and returning it via I-70 east at the first interchange.

I-279. Work to widen the highway's bridge over Suffolk Street in the East Street Valley to include a shoulder lane will resume in April, causing inbound traffic to be restricted to two lanes during morning rush hour and one lane at other times. ▲

Vanpool Riders Needed

Weekday vanpools to downtown Pittsburgh depart from and return to communities throughout the region. Current passenger openings include the following:

From: Delmont, Export, Murrysville

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$90
Contact: Barry Ryan
Phone: 234-6152

From: Gibsonia

Work times: 7:30 - 4:15
Monthly fare: \$80
Contact: John Guadagnino
Phone: 433-5581

From: Greensburg, Jeannette, Irwin

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$85
Contact: Joe Lastik
Phone: 434-2765

From: Greensburg, Jeannette

Work times: 8:00 - 5:15
Monthly fare: \$95
Contact: Keven Bossart
Phone: 577-3475

From: Greensburg

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$95
Contact: Gary McConnell
Phone: 644-6695

From: Greensburg, Rt. 30

Work times: 7:30 - 4:15
Monthly fare: \$90
Contact: B. Gindlesperger
Phone: 644-5949

From: Greensburg, Irwin

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$95
Contact: George Bialon
Phone: 234-1495

From: Holiday Park, Plum, Monroeville

Work times: 8:00 - 4:45
Monthly fare: \$70
Contact: Richard Conrad
Phone: 281-6900

From: Imperial

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$70
Contact: Ronald Senovich
Phone: 681-8311

From: Industry, Beaver

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$75
Contact: Deborah Osman
Phone: 234-5397

From: Irwin, North Huntingdon

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$71
Contact: David Onder
Phone: 562-6248

From: Irwin, North Huntingdon

Work times: 8:30 - 4:15
Monthly fare: \$110
Contact: Patrick Rafferty
Phone: 565-2169

From: Latrobe, Rt. 30

Work times: 7:30 - 4:30
Monthly fare: \$95
Contact: Luanne Stepanic
Phone: 234-4832

From: Leechburg, Apollo

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$87
Contact: Robert Reddinger
Phone: 644-4203

From: Mars, Valencia

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$72
Contact: Patrick Dickson
Phone: 433-4549

From: Monaca, Ambridge

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$70
Contact: Cindy Robinson
Phone: 234-0517

From: Monroeville

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$80
Contact: Harry Banks
Phone: 433-4835

From: Moon Township

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$85
Contact: James Cafaro
Phone: 227-2856

From: Murrysville, Monroeville

Work times: 8:00 - 4:45
Monthly fare: \$77
Contact: Mark Gibson
Phone: 497-6792

From: Natrona Heights, Allegheny Valley

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$92
Contact: Carolyn Nulph
Phone: 261-3640

From: New Kensington, Oakmont, Plum

Work times: 8:15 - 5:15
Monthly fare: \$79
Contact: George Carabin
Phone: 433-3432

From: Pleasant Hills

Work times: 8:30 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$65
Contact: Wade Fox
Phone: 391-5590 x 312

From: Plum Boro, Penn Hills

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$73
Contact: John Smith
Phone: 255-7717

From: Robinson, Forest Grove

Work times: 7:30 - 4:30
Monthly fare: \$80
Contact: Ray Terpack
Phone: 633-3792

From: West Newton, Belle Vernon

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$82
Contact: Sandra Rees
Phone: 227-3030

From: West Mifflin

Work times: 8:00 - 5:00
Monthly fare: \$70
Contact: Adesta Kondas
Phone: 633-3892



Gas Station Owners Promote Ridesharing as a Clean Air Strategy

A 400-member association of gas station and auto repair shop owners in southwestern Pennsylvania has begun organizing a program to raise public awareness and encourage voluntary action to reduce air emissions, particularly on hot summer days. The association's effort, called "Ozone Action Days," is patterned after similar programs in Tucson, Detroit, and Cincinnati. Ridesharing is a key component of its program.

The unlikely alliance between companies whose livelihood depends on private cars and those who advocate carpooling or transit use, is one result of a legislative mandate that cuts across traditional economic alignments. The 1990 federal Clean Air Act Amendment, whose strict standards are being phased in over a period of years, has cited the seven-county Greater Pittsburgh metropolitan area as a "moderate non-attainment" area for ozone.

Ground-level ozone is a byproduct of internal combustion. On hot, sunny days, the ozone combines with other atmospheric gases to form smog. During an average of 6 to 12 days a year, the ozone level in southwestern Pennsylvania rises to levels which trigger official concern. But even

with improved air quality, the law requires every region in the country to maintain reduced emission levels indefinitely — regardless of any growth which may have occurred.

To bring non-attainment areas into conformity, federal authorities can impose various sanctions. However, with the rejection of centralized emissions testing and public hostility toward reformulated fuels, the number of clean air options has dwindled. As an association whose members stand to be singled out for costly remedial measures, the Petroleum Retailers and Auto Repair Association on February 15 launched its own initiative.

In essence, the program involves broadcasting air quality alerts over TV and radio whenever weather conditions are ripe for ozone pollution. On these High Ozone Days, people would be urged to take a variety of voluntary measures to reduce their emissions and to make more efficient use of transportation. For example, in Cincinnati, to encourage increased use of transit, Metro cut its summertime fares to just 50¢. In Tucson, on Ozone Action Days, the system dropped its fares altogether. Carpooling, avoiding the use of

charcoal grills, deferring lawn mowing until evening, and preventing gasoline spills at service stations are also among the common-sense steps being promoted in response to Ozone Action Day alerts.

But mobilizing public awareness and spurring individual action are also central themes of the Association's program. "It's not just business's responsibility to clean up the air," according to the Association Assistant Director Regina Lasek.

"Government keeps coming to business to reduce emissions, but individuals don't feel that they need to do anything. Meanwhile, everybody is upset because business is leaving the area," she said. "So our main goal is to educate the public that it's everyone's responsibility to clean up the air. And there are lots of little things that don't cost anything, that aren't a lot of inconvenience, that everyone can do."

The Association, which hopes to have its "Regional Ozone Action Program" up and running this summer, has applied for a grant to the Allegheny County Department of Health to help underwrite its expenses. The organization has also sought support from PAT, DER, and SPRPC as well as from its own members.▲

What Do You Think?

If you would like to comment on any of the articles in this issue of *Triangle Commuter News* or if you have any story ideas or commuter-related issues that you would like to see developed in future editions, please write or call us at the address noted on the mailing panel, below. ▲



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