

Penn Central Chief Visits Area, Stresses Need for More Business

By Mardo Williams

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Columbus Dispatch (November 10, 1970) – The president of financially troubled Penn Central Transportation Co. was in Columbus Tuesday to tour the railroad's terminal facilities, greet some 60 important shippers and tell the press the company has no problems that an increase in business won't solve.

William H. Moore, who left a post as executive vice president of operations for the Southern Railway System Sept. 1 to become chief executive of the Penn Central, said the railroad wants to sell the depot property on N. High St., is selling other industrial land to acquire cash, and has invoked operating efficiencies.

HE SAID THE nation's largest railroad will have trouble meeting a federally-recommended 32 per cent increase in wages.

The wage recommendation and other problems kept Moore on the telephone of his private car – parked at the Union Station – from 5 a.m. until an hour after the scheduled start of an inspection tour by highway-rail cars. Aides said he was in touch with Penn Central trustees and Washington officials.

HIS APPEARANCE HERE – first official visit to the Columbus area – brought out these facts:

- Penn Central wants to sell, but is not seriously negotiating with anyone, for transfer of the Union depot property. Approximately 30 acres is involved. The railroad would retain east-west lines through the property but would sell the remainder of the lands.
- Other industrial land here, including more than 60 acres near Leonard Ave., 18th and 20th Sts. and some 30 acres along Grandview and McKinley Aves, is for sale.
- The McKinley Ave. land is being cleared of tracks and debris. Much of it has been sold at \$15,000 an acre.
- The railroad's tax situation is better in Ohio than in some other states. Between Jan. 1 and June 20, Penn Central paid \$204,915 to Columbus and \$8 million in Ohio for first half 1969 real estate and corporate taxes. Still owed are \$204,915 in Columbus and \$5,360,000 in Ohio.
- The court has ruled that communities where the value of Penn Central taxes represents 15 per cent or more of the district's total taxes can file a petition and obtain tax relief.

MOORE SAID THE General Motors auto worker's strike has been detrimental to Penn Central volume.

"We have lost some 6,000 carloads of cargo over what we would have hauled if there had been no General Motors strike," William A. Lashley, vice president of public relations, said.

Moore asked shippers, in a speech at the Lincoln Lodge luncheon, to give Penn Central all the business they can.

HE SAID THE railroad is working on the problem of keeping trains on schedule.

Lack of cabooses has caused some delays, he said, so Penn Central ordered a speed-up in repairs and ordered 50 new units.

Engines will be a factor when volume improves, he said. So, he is anxious for settlement of the GM strike to facilitate assembly of 127 locomotives on order at a GM plant.

DURING HIS Columbus visit, Moore toured the \$26 million Buckeye Yard at Hilliard – an electronic marvel of making up trains automatically.

During an open house for shippers, public officials and news media, he noted the yard is at the hub of seven Penn Central trunk lines linking Columbus with Pittsburgh, Charleston, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Toledo and Chicago.

Moore admitted the yard is larger than the road can use efficiently at the present time. But he said the yard is beginning to solve "a very serious problem of service to Columbus and other cities in our Southern Region."



TOURING — Penn Central President William H. Moore, on the steps of the railroad's No. 1 business car, prepares to leave on a tour of terminal facilities and the \$26 million electronic marshaling yard at Hilliard. Welcoming him to

Columbus are James E. Martin, center, general manager of the Southern Region, and Larry A. Baggerly, superintendent of the Columbus Division. (Dispatch Photo)

HE SAID THAT during visits to 16 key Penn Central locations he had told the rail's 10,000 employees that the reorganized firm must give top priority to increasing business eliminating waste and improving service to shippers.

Accompanying him to Columbus were Robert G. Flannery, vice president of operations; Lashley, John J. Maher, vice president of labor relations; assistant vice presidents Ralph N. Cramer Sr., Edward P. Frasher and J. Hansford Sharp; C.T. Popma, chief engineering officer; J.H. Heron, chief mechanical officer, and John B. ransom, assistant to the president.