New Coaches Spark Rider Increase; Operating Results Exceed Estimates

After three months of operations, AC Transit reported this month that the district is living up to its promises to the taxpayer.

Operating results are better than engineers had expected, according to the first full financial statement made by the district to the board of directors since taking over from Key System Transit Lines last October.

Revenue was sufficient to pay all expenses and provide funds for bond servicing and equipment replacement, John R. Worthington, general manager, reported.

He said revenue for the period came to $2,917,795. Expenses were $2,609,981, leaving $307,814 available for bond servicing costs.

Patronage Increase

The surplus, for the first three months, was approximately $71,000 more than the projections of engineering estimates that were determined a year ago.

Calculations of the engineering consultants, De Leuw, Cather & Company, provided for sufficient annual surplus reserves to renew equipment as it becomes fully depreciated without the necessity of resorting to a future bond issue for equipment replacement.

Engineers based their figures on a patronage increase of three per cent a year for five years.

In January, passenger revenue showed an increase of six per cent over the entire system, during a month that ordinarily might show a slight decline. However, Worthington pointed out the month had one more week day and one less Saturday than last year, accounting for part of the increase. Weather also was more favorable.

Income Adequate

Sparked by the new “Transit Liners” which went into service Christmas Day, transbay lines showed an increase for the month of 8.8 per cent. Local revenue was up 4.4 per cent, even before the new local equipment went into service.

“Experiences of the first three months strengthens our belief the district can meet its obligations without an increase in taxes,” Worthington told the board.

William J. Bettencourt, board president, also stressed the “district is living up to its promises of providing better service at current fares and taxes.

“Considering that the district does a $12,000,000 gross revenue business a year, it is truly remarkable that the estimates and actual income figures are so close.”
LOCAL passengers sample new 51-passenger buses ordered for service in 11 East Bay cities by AC Transit. The extra-large buses feature new destination signs, an improved-safety rear door exit, wide seats and aisles and sweeping “picture windows.”

Riders Impressed With Luxury Features, Comfort Riding of Big New Coaches

East Bay riders got their chance to enjoy the latest in transportation this month as the first of 125 buses ordered for service in 11 East Bay cities rolled into operation.

Long, wide and streamlined, the 51-passenger buses got a pleased reception from riders, who appeared particularly impressed with the spaciousness of the coach and the wide outside view presented by the “picture windows.”

Twenty-five of the ultramodern coaches were ready for service on opening day, with all 125 slated for operation before the end of the month.

The new buses, which joined the fleet of interurban liners already covering transbay routes, provide basic service on the district’s major lines. They are being augmented during rush-hour periods with refurbished equipment now on hand.

Test runs were to be made on several other lines to determine if the wide new coaches are practical on hill routes and some of the narrow streets.

Remaining neighborhood lines, where smaller buses are more feasible, will be served by modernized and repainted coaches acquired from Key System.

The local liners feature an improved-safety rear exit door which is operated by the riders when they leave the bus. The coach cannot move while the door is open, putting the passenger in control during alighting.

Other improvements include 36-inch wide seats, an added strip of window space so standees can see out without stooping, fluorescent lights, low entrance step and varying color schemes.

As the new coaches go into service, outdated gasoline driven buses are being removed. Seventy-five were slated for retirement in January while nearly 250 in all will be taken out of service within the weeks ahead.

Death Claims Two Division 2 Workers

Heart attacks claimed two veteran transit workers in January, Charles O. Mason, 55, and Joseph J. Fedor, both of Division 2.

Mr. Mason, a Class A mechanic in the building maintenance department, died Jan. 17 at his home, 620 Key Route Blvd., in Albany.

A veteran of train and ferry boat service, he started with Key System 27 years ago as one of the track gang in train operations.

Over the years he also worked as a deck hand on the ferry boats, as a foreman of janitors, a truck driver and paving gang foreman, before moving into building maintenance 15 years ago.

He was an avid railroad fan and a frequent passenger on special rail trips taken with other steam devotees.

 Surviving are his widow, Grace, two daughters, Jeannie and Mrs. Judy Kangus, and a grandson, Mark.

Mr. Fedor, 68, welder at Division 2, died suddenly at his home, 3778 39th Ave., on Jan. 29.

He went to work for Key System in 1944. Active in lay Catholic circles, he is survived by his widow, Marie, two married daughters, and a son.

Twelve New Operators Welcomed to District

The “welcome aboard” sign was posted this month for 12 new bus drivers, who completed their training for AC Transit. New operators, and assignments, include:

Division 2

R. D. Delanty, 3643 Grand Ave., Oakland; M. D. Alexander, 241 So. 17th St., Richmond; R. L. Flowers, 16 Island View, Pittsburg; A. A. Jones, 1056 45th St., Emeryville.

Division 3

O. W. Perdue, Sr., 214 Ries St., Vallejo; W. W. Hankins, 2684 Kevin Rd., Richmond; R. C. Armijo, 634 Stannage Ave., Albany.

Division 4

D. W. Matthews, 2245 So. 1st St., San Jose; L. O. Brickson, 1321 3rd Ave., Oakland; R. L. Reed, 32176 Champlain St., Hayward; R. H. Mason, 1523 Harrison St., Oakland; L. B. Bain, 7668 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland.

Unloading Coaches Job For ‘Thin Man’

It’s taken a lot of wiggling and some thin maintenance men to get the big new local “Transit Liners” safely unloaded from freight cars, according to Carl Knutson, foreman of building maintenance.

The new motor coaches are 102 inches wide and 40 feet long and if parked exactly center in the box cars, have only a three-inch clearance on each side, Knutson said. To get them out without “using a can opener,” the crew knocked out the center blocks, drove the coach as far as they could to the front of the freight car—usually about two feet—then knocked out the rear blocks and backed the bus off carefully!

Only one coach out of the first 53 gave unusual trouble. It failed to start, so the crew had to pull it back far enough so men could squeeze to the front, and push it off the car.

Then, of course, it started.
Telephone Information Service Expanded
To Give Speedier Service to Transit Riders

One of AC Transit's most sensitive contacts with the public—the telephone information bureau—has been overhauled and expanded to provide speedier service.

Nearly twice as many information clerks now are on duty to answer the hundreds of daily telephone calls regarding transit services, according to General Manager John R. Worthington.

Large route maps have been posted in bureau quarters for ready reference. In addition, coded files containing detailed information on the district's 70 transit lines have been provided each clerk, so that questions can be answered quickly and easily as possible. The office also has been enlarged and modernized for more efficient operation.

Improvement of the information service was given top priority when the district acquired Key System Transit Lines, Worthington said, to prevent long delays sometimes encountered by patrons seeking information.

"We also are insisting on absolute courtesy," he added.

Two operators are posted at the main telephone switchboard, located at the district's Emeryville division at 45th St. and San Pablo Ave. Three additional clerks are stationed at special nearby desks and telephones to handle the varied questions received during peak hours.

Questions generally concern information on how to reach a particular destination. But occasionally the answers are not readily available, according to Supervisor Genevieve Parker.

One caller, for example, wanted to know the correct bus to take to a MacArthur Blvd. motel. He was unable to remember the location, but after a moment's thought, added: "It's the one with the blue bedspreads."

Questions regarding pet dogs on buses are easily answered. They are permitted if enclosed and concealed in a box.

One recent caller, however, was not satisfied with the answer. She owned a large German shepherd.

The clerks sometimes must ask information before they can give the correct information. In one such case, they asked a prospective rider, "Where do you board?"

The answer: "I don't board. I live at home."

The information service has its busiest moments during the working day, but clerks also have numerous night calls—especially during TV commercials.

PROMPT SERVICE—New and expanded quarters for Telephone Information Bureau aid clerks in providing speedy answers to hundreds of daily questions on service. Manning telephones from front to rear are Vivian Lueckfeld, Gladys Butler and Supervisor Genevieve Parker.

What the Editors Are Saying About Transit

Oakland Tribune:

Transit's Success

GENERAL Manager John R. Worthington's report to the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District that income is running above expectations is an encouraging piece of news in the formerly drowsy history of transit in Oakland.

Mr. Worthington's report states that during the first three months of operation, the district netted $71,000 more than consultants had estimated before the district took over Key System.

We wish to congratulate the new district on the initial success of its operation, but we agree with Mr. Worthington that over-optimism can be dangerous.

What the picture shows is that the public is accepting the better service offered by the new district and likes the new equipment—the big modern buses.

However, Key System paid certain taxes from which the new district is exempt and this could well contribute to a portion of the improved current income.

The general manager also pointed out that the higher net income is due partly from two extra working days this January, over a year ago.

We fervently hope that Mr. Worthington's pledge to hold fares at the present level and to avoid a tax increase can be maintained, but the district still needs a vast increase in riders before it can consider itself out of the weeds.

But, we repeat, the news is encouraging.

New Signs Tell Bus Route, Destination

New destination signs, designed to give riders better information on where each bus is going, have been installed on the fleet of "Transit Liners" put into local service this month.

Head signs, in large white letters against a black background, feature the main street used by the bus or, in some cases, the city destination.

Additional street information and points of interest are posted in smaller letters. Side signs also carry route and destination.

On long routes, the signs are changed by the bus driver at different locations to help waiting passengers understand the bus route through East Bay cities.

The signs, which complement the "new look" of the motor coaches, are designed to revive the traditional custom of identifying a line by its route, such as the "Shattuck Ave. Line," instead of merely by number.

Committees Appointed by New President of Board

Committee appointments made by William J. Bettencourt, president of the Board of Directors, at the February board meeting include:

Projects Development—William H. Coburn, Jr., chairman; Robert K. Barber and Paul E. Deadrich, members.


Personnel and Public Relations—Robert K. Barber, chairman; William E. Berk and Paul E. Deadrich, members.
Latham Square Bus Shelter Dedicated

The imaginative new Latham Square bus waiting shelter was dedicated on Feb. 14 in a program that made colorful use of a Valentine Day theme.

Pretty girls, flowers and singing birds helped to set the Valentine background for the ceremonies, which featured the unveiling of a plaque.

Civic leaders who participated arrived in one of the new AC Transit buses, led by a motorcycle escort from the Oakland Police Dept.

As they left the bus, the celebrities carried giant transfers, which were perforated by a big punch operated by two contestants in the current "Miss Oakland" competition.

They were then taken to the speakers stand by Horizon Club members from the Oakland Council of Camp Fire Girls.

Flowers, donated by neighboring Rhodes, were distributed to women in the audience by still more pretty girls.

Plaque Unveiled

Andre T. Fontes, chairman of the Oakland Park Commission, as chairman of the day, introduced civic leaders and representatives of sponsoring groups.

Official presentation of the structure was made by Hugh Tebault, president of the Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Humane Education. Mayor Clifford Rishell accepted in behalf of the city and unveiled the plaque.

The plaque pays tribute to the various groups which contributed to the achievement of the dramatic new shelter.

William J. Bettencourt, president of AC Transit's board of directors, spoke on "More Than a Bus Shelter," while J. R. Knowland, publisher of the Oakland Tribune, and William F. Knowland, editor and assistant publisher, paid tribute to those responsible for re-development of the historic spot.

The new structure replaces a shelter that served generations of bus and street car travelers. Landscaping by park department crews accent the structure and its adjoining Latham Fountain, erected in 1913 as a memorial to pioneer residents James H. Latham and Henrietta Marshall Latham.

Special Features

Sponsors of the planting include the Business Men's Garden Club of Oakland and eight Horizon Club groups.

As a special feature, the shelter, designed by Oakland architect Walter Bearden and landscape architect Amedee McSourdry of the park department, includes an aviary occupied by colorful birds.

Phone booths and special newspaper dispenser racks are built into pillars, while waiting riders will find pastel-tinted benches placed under recessed lights and electric heating elements. A stainless steel drinking fountain also is included, together with system maps showing AC Transit lines.

The project has been financed by neighboring property owners, and business establishments, by the Latham Foundation, and AC Transit, in cooperation with the city's park and street departments.
'A Seat for Every Rider'

Buses Added to Carry Traffic Increase

Commuter service on more than half of the trans-bay lines operated by AC Transit was expanded during the month to accommodate an increase in riders.

Sixteen additional buses were routed into service during morning and evening peak commute hours, in line with the district’s stepped-up program of providing a seat for every rider.

In the morning hours, the buses have been worked into schedules of the B—Lakeshore, E—Claremont, F—Berkeley, G—Albany, K—Havenscourt, L—Richmond, N—San Leandro, O—Alameda, and R—Hayward lines.

In the evening, an additional bus has been added to Line A, leaving Broadway in Oakland for San Francisco.

A minimum of seven extra buses also have been stationed at the Transbay Transit Terminal in San Francisco, to be used as needed.

The upswing in commuter traffic was attributed by General Manager John R. Worthington to the new equipment which went into service Christmas day.

Directors Vote Employee Salary Boost

Salary increases averaging 6 per cent have been granted to 130 AC Transit supervisory and clerical employees at an annual cost to the district of $45,000.

The board of directors also have agreed to a study of job classifications and the establishment of salary ranges for all non-union personnel, in an effort to simplify the employee practices inherited from Key System Transit Lines.

The individual salary boosts for non-union workers followed similar increases granted 1,100 bus operators and maintenance personnel last October.

Director John McDonnell, finance committee chairman, said the increases were necessary to bring salaries of these employees in line with the wages now paid to bus drivers and maintenance workers.

Salary raises for several key personnel including General Manager John R. Worthington were held in abeyance pending further study. The increases, however, affected nearly all non-union employees in the maintenance, transportation, purchasing, safety, accounting and treasury departments.

Have Troubles? Ask "Mo"

It's Modjeski to the Rescue When Bus Drivers Have Problems of Work or Wives

By Virginia Dennison

When the phone rings in the chief clerk's office at Division 2, the answer is a terse "Modjeski," but the voice is soft and feminine.

For G. L. Modjeski—who never uses her first name— is probably the only woman to fill a chief clerk's post for a metropolitan transit district.

Men are her business—the bus drivers who operate out of AC Transit's biggest division. The women drivers come under her jurisdiction also, as do dispatchers. But mostly it's men.

She never has any problems with them, either (maybe just small ones!). She handles their paper work and listens to their troubles—which range from a day off to domestic tangles. The bus drivers have long since learned that a lady boss has definite advantages, like a big heart and a ready ear for troubles.

Along with respect for "Mo's" abilities, Division 2 workers have fond memories of another attribute, her great skill at cooking.

An easy expert at everything from chocolate cake to spaghetti sauce, it was "first," chief clerk at Division 2 and right man to the late L. A. Trathen. She has continued in the post, helping Trathen's successor, J. D. Goodman.

Mrs. Modjeski is an enthusiastic housewife, and is just as enthusiastic about the championship bowling skill of her husband, Alfred, and activities of her adopted daughters, Pamela, 6, and Deanna, 3.

She also admits to a temper—on occasion—as attested by her reaction to a disgruntled, swearing passenger in street car days. She literally kicked him off the car and is still proud that he didn't hit a step on his way out.

G. L. Modjeski

And she can cook...
Veteran Employees End Career

Long careers in the field of transportation have been ended by two men, with their retirement from AC Transit District effective Feb. 1.

Henry Charles Hanson, 65, can date his employment back 38 years, when he went to work as a street car conductor.

He stayed on the cars until 1948 when he became a motor coach operator. On March 15, 1950, he switched to trains as a conductor, then returned to motor coaches in 1958.

A native of Victoria, B.C., Hanson served in the Canadian Army before coming to work for Key System. He lives at 5114 Grove St., Oakland.

John Edward Read, 65, is another of the veteran Key System employees from the days when transit meant tracks.

Read was general track foreman in charge of rail removal and repaving programs until a serious illness caused him to take a leave of absence in October, 1959. His long tenure with transit covered the days when the East Bay moved on rails by street car and by train.

Read, who lives at 6 Linda Ave., Oakland, went to work for Key System in 1934 as a “gandy dancer” — track laborer to those of the diesel dynasty. He was made a track foreman in 1936 and, in 1947, became general track gang foreman. He later was promoted from that post to general foreman in charge of rail maintenance, the post he held at the time he became ill.

Commuters Give Reaction to Suburban Coaches, Decide They Are Deluxe Riding

What was the reaction from commuters, after they had their first trip on one of AC Transit’s new deluxe interurban coaches?

Typical reaction, according to a survey made by the Oakland Tribune, was voiced by Allen K. Anderson, who has been riding to work in San Francisco for 31 years:

“It’s wonderful. This is deluxe. You can even sit down and read on this one.”

Anderson, of 611 E. 20th St., has tried all methods of commuting, from ferry boat to his own car.

“This has got my car beat all to the devil,” he said. “After all, I’ve got nothing to do here but ride along like a bird.”

His regular driver, H. O. Sumpter, of 581 54th St., Oakland, thinks the new buses are “one of the best things that ever happened in Oakland transportation since I’ve been here.”

He had some reservations about the expansive windshield and the narrower aisles and one door for loading and unloading.

“But it’s like a new pair of shoes, you have to get used to it before you really know what you think. There is no question it’s the nicest piece of equipment we’ve ever had.”

Other riders missed the rear door— not needed on intercity lines, transit officials believe—but they had high praise for the smooth operation, wide seats and the new color scheme.

Improved Safety of Window Exits Tested

The 10 large emergency window exits on new interurban buses already have proven safe and effective as the result of an unexpected test.

When one of AC Transit’s buses was struck nearly head-on by a pick-up truck recently on the Bay Bridge, the single front door of the bus became jammed.

The driver, following instructions posted beneath each window, quickly popped open two of the big view windows and, with the help of a passenger, aided the other 10 riders to climb from the bus.

The incident clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of having 10 windows as emergency exits, according to General Manager John R. Worthington.

An accident might block both doors but could hardly block all the windows on both sides of a bus, he pointed out.

A metal plate below each window carries the simple instructions: “For emergency escape, push out window at bottom.”

The window swings out with hard pressure. It is hinged at the top, so does not fall to the ground.

This new type of window exit is approved by the Interstate Commerce Commission and the California Public Utilities Commission and is standard on all latest model interurban and long distance buses, Worthington said.

Because of the large number of window exits, the new interurban Transit Liners are far safer than older model buses with two doors, he said.

The 175 new coaches for local and express service will have a front and rear door for greater facility in loading and unloading, but also will contain the large escape windows as an added safety feature.
At an adjourned regular meeting January 10, 1961, the Board of Directors:
- Reviewed improved emergency exit facilities on new interurban buses.
- Referred consideration of salary adjustments for some 130 supervisory and clerical employees to Committee on Finance, on motion of Director Barber.

* * *

At an adjourned regular meeting January 19, the Board of Directors:
- Approved salary increases averaging six per cent to supervisory and clerical employees, effective January 1, 1961, on motion of Director McDonnell.
- Authorized a study of job classifications and the establishment of salary ranges for all non-union personnel, on motion of Director Coburn.

* * *

At the regular meeting February 1, the Board of Directors:
- Received a report from the General Manager on results of operation (Details, Page 1).
- Authorized preparation of specifications for the purchase of new bus tokens to fill a shortage in the number required for daily use, on motion of Director Barber.
- Approved district membership in the American Transit Association, on motion of Director Barber.

* * *

- Received notice from Beninger Transportation Service that the firm will seek $15,000 in settlement for loss of its Richmond-El Sobrante line when the district commenced new service in that area. The AC Board of Directors, which had proposed a $5,000 settlement, voted to withdraw the offer, on motion of Director Coburn.
- Approved lease of property adjoining Division 4 terminal at Seminary Ave. and San Leandro St., Oakland, for temporary storage of surplus bus equipment, on motion of Vice President Copeland.