AC Transit Board Elects Officers; New Express Given Green Light

Commute Line Approved For Washington Manor

Inauguration of a new intercity express line—the fifth for the district—was approved this month by the board of directors as part of a projected program of speeding up and streamlining East Bay bus service.

The new express, Line 36, will provide rapid and direct commute service between the Washington Manor and Bonaire residential areas of San Leandro and downtown Oakland.

Scheduled to go into operation on Feb. 4, it will operate initially during morning and evening hours, with a plan for expanded service as soon as patronage warrants the increase.

Traveling on the Nimitz Freeway between San Leandro and Oakland, the new express will cut traveling time in half, making the run from Washington Manor in 32 minutes and from Bonaire, in 29 minutes.

The new line is among several proposed express routes under study by the AC Transit staff in line with plans to move riders from major population centers to downtown areas as speedily and conveniently as possible—faster and easier than they can drive and park their own cars.

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Retiring President Praises District Gains; Notes 'Phenomenal' Increase in Patronage

William J. Bettencourt stepped down as president of the board of directors this month after a two-year term, with words of praise for the District’s accomplishments—and the figures to back them up.

Bus patronage has shown a 12 per cent increase since the District took over from Key System Transit Lines in Oct., 1960, he disclosed.

This increase, at a time when the nation is still experiencing a downward trend in transit riding, has made the district the “wonder child” of the industry, Bettencourt added. As a result, other properties are now following the lead of AC Transit in developing plans for “intelligent, progressive transit—the way the public wants it.”

Capsuling accomplishments of the past two years, he said the appointment last March of Kenneth F. Hensel as general manager brought to the District the “knowledge and temperament” which helped the board and staff to move ahead at a smooth, unhampered pace—and that this pace could be expected to continue.

He noted the acquisition of new equipment, first 250 new buses, then an additional 30 new motor coaches.

“Now we are contemplating another 35 to 45 additional buses, far surpassing equipment estimates of our engineers.” He also pointed to development of a school bus service formula “equitable to all areas in the district,” innovations such as a park and ride center; a ride and shop validating plan; a Sunday pass, and a program for building attractive passenger shelters.

Bettencourt had particular praise for the fiscal responsibility and integrity shown by board and staff members and their efforts in protecting public funds and avoiding waste.

“Despite inflation and an increase in the costs of doing business—labor costs alone jumped more than 15 per cent since the District went into operation—we have held the line on fares and, at least up to the present time, on taxes as well. And there has been no slump in providing new and better service and equipment.”

He also praised the sensitivity and responsiveness of the board as to what the public wanted and its constant willingness to hear, study and grant, where justified, the public’s requests for changes or improvements.

Bettencourt, an executive with Friden, Inc., of San Leandro, will remain on the board as a director.

New Line 36 to Speed Service

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The express will operate from Washington Ave. and Lewelling Blvd. through Washington Manor and Bonaire, then via Nimitz Freeway to downtown Oakland, looping via Telegraph Ave., West Grand Ave. and Broadway.

The new line will be the first major improvement of the new year, adding to the following record of improvements made during the past year: 24 added schedules during morning peak hours; six midday schedules and 12 additional evening peak hour schedules; seven basic new services added and six major extensions or revisions to existing service.

Berkeley ‘Ride & Shop’ Plan to Continue

The unique “Ride & Shop” bus validating plan, started by downtown Berkeley merchants and AC Transit two months ago, will continue in operation for at least another month.

This was the decision made by board members, who voted to extend the plan until Feb. 15 while merchants and the district study results of the innovation.

Under the plan, shoppers can receive free round-trip bus transit upon having a coupon validated by participating concerns. The coupons are given out upon request by operators on all lines operating or through Berkeley.

Latham Square Building Chosen as New General Headquarters of District

AC Transit offices will be moved from the present location at 1106 Broadway to more efficient facilities in the Latham Square Building at 16th St. and Telegraph Ave.

The board of directors, in approving the move, followed the recommendation of a special committee on office building facilities, which had investigated more than 40 proposals over the past several months.

By moving to the Latham Square Building, the general offices will obtain additional space, improved building services and more efficient utilization of space at a cost less than that being paid at the present headquarters.

The new facilities will include a customer services office, handling tickets, information, lost and found and bus chartering arrangements.

The move is expected to be made in March.

The district took over the lease on the present quarters when it acquired Key System Transit Lines over two years ago. The building had been used by Key System since 1948.

Transit Expansion In Contra Costa Explored

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors has decided to ask cities in central and eastern parts of the county to participate in a study into feasibility of expanding AC Transit service into their area.

The supervisors voted to request the aid of the cities in making a bus survey after receiving a report of specific recommendations from their City-County Transit Advisory Committee.

The committee recommended a study of AC Transit bus transportation to Concord, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Pittsburg, Antioch and Brentwood. They also asked that Bay Area Rapid Transit and AC Transit enter negotiations to provide feeder service to rapid transit stations.

The supervisors failed to approve this suggestion, however, after it was pointed out a feeder system study would not be justified for at least 10 years.

The transit advisory group was asked to contact schools to see if they, too, would be interested in participating in the survey, estimated to cost $10,000.
New Workers Welcomed to District Ranks

The district started the new year with a number of new faces among its employees, including the following, who went to work in November and December:

Executive Office

General Office
Treasury: Don C. Gardiner, 2109 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, vault clerk.
Accounting: Florence Christianson, 2951 Madera Ave., Oakland, senior accountant clerk; Joann R. Tucker, 2518 Clay St., Alameda, key punch operator.

Emeryville Division
P.B.X. and Information: Vonna Laveille Moore, 6935 Chambers Dr., Oakland; Mary Helen Smith, 5616 El Dorado, El Cerrito, P.B.X. operators.
Maintenance: Max Berger, 27810 Orlando Ave., Hayward, service employee "B".

Bus Operators: B. L. Parsons, 27876 La Porte, Hayward; E. F. Hokanson, 4201 Lunceol Dr., Concord; F. R. Flanigan, 1318 Magnolia St., Oakland; L. Stottemire, 479 35th St., Oakland; R. E. Bruce, 290 Tunis Rd., Oakland; B. E. Youngblood, 485 E. Santa Fe Ave., Pittsburgh; J. E. Van Riper, 3507 14th Ave., Oakland; W. J. Ramsey, 1410 Orlando Dr., San Jose; D. J. Duma, 530 41st St., Apt. 13, Oakland; F. M. Cisneros, 542 31st St., Oakland; A. P. Gumataota, 1704 Walnut St., Alameda; Eligie Williams, 225 Navy Rd., San Francisco; Stanley Williams, 762 11th St., Apt. 4, Oakland; G. P. Hentschel, 2060-1 Buena Vista, Alameda; William Mathes, 671 Vernon St., Oakland; E. L. Davis, 2458 Prince St., Berkeley; I. E. Merritt, 2827 Turk St., San Francisco; M. S. Fulton, 521 Jean St., Oakland.

Richmond Division
H. L. Jefferson Jr., 1918 Florida Ave., Richmond; J. M. Novacek, 2319 San Pablo Ave., San Pablo; J. T. Ball, 915 Giant Ctr., Richmond; J. D. Haynes, 2211 Elspano Ct., San Pablo; W. L. Blaylock, 2526 Duncan Rd., Pinole; R. H. Lewis, 2455 Greenwood Dr., San Pablo; J. B. Gwin, 1930 Hill Ave., Richmond; M. O. Huff, 124 Rancho Motel, San Pablo; G. J. Cook, 949 37th St., Richmond.

Seminary Division
K. C. Petersen, 2712 Sunset Ave., Oakland; C. W. Kissinger, 730 Blossom Way, Hayward; L. A. Golden, 781 Delano St., San Lorenzo; B. L. Sheridan, 8603 Hillside St., Oakland; J. E. Noel, 742 Bishop Ave., Hayward; W. D. Siedentopf, 3763 Delaware Dr., Fremont; E. A. Cordeiro, 250 W. Jackson St., Hayward; R. E. Kiepke, 16830 Esteban Ave., San Leandro; R. F. Russo, 27636 Melbourne Ave., Hayward; James Strickland, 238 Via Pecora, San Lorenzo.

Record Revenue Talled with Aid of Bus Riding

Pre-holiday Shoppers

The district reached its highest revenue point yet during the week ending Dec. 9, hitting $965,051 in fare box collections—its own gift from active holiday riding.

Indicative of the increase in passengers, the city express lines accounted for $10,336 of the total, with an average of $2,067 collected daily on the four lines. The figure is a 165 per cent increase over the total revenue of $785 turned in when the express went into operation in March, 1961.

The record revenue also includes $129,744 from local lines for the week and $95,871 from transbay service.
AMBIDEXTROUS—Versatile as both a conductor and motorman in early trolley days, J. A. Heck is just as handy today doing his own housework. Photo at right shows Heck, now nearly 96, as he looked at beginning of career.

From Oats to Diesel

Pensioners Predate First Horse Car

By Virginia Dennison

The appearance of the first horse car in the East Bay was still three years away when AC Transit's oldest pensioner, A. J. Klimax, going on 97, was born on May 21, 1866.

Horse cars hadn't even gotten off to a trotting start when J. A. Heck was born almost 96 years ago—second oldest pensioner on the district files.

Their life span has covered an incredible change in transit—from horse cars to steam trains; cable cars to the flourishing era of the electrics, before tracks gave way to tires and today's motor coach.

The last horse car was still operating in Hayward when both of them went to work for the company that eventually became the Key System.

But their personal memory concerns the day of the trolley and the commute train, an era of experience now remaining in the memory of only a relatively few.

It was the late James P. Potter, first superintendent of the Key Route and father of D. J. Potter, the district's present transportation manager, who gave Heck his job in 1904.

A Pennsylvanian Dutchman, Heck had served as a canteen steward—the Army used to have certain bar refinements—at Fort Keogh, Mont., while the Cheyenne Indians were being kept in hand.

After a look at some of the rest of the country, he got a job on the street cars in New Orleans, then moved on to California in 1903.

Because he didn't like the hills in San Francisco, he followed a friend's advice to look for a job in Oakland "after I found out where it was."

"When Mr. Potter discovered I could work either end—as motorman or conductor—he put me to work in Alameda, on the dinkey."

Although his hearing and sight now are bad and he suffers from arthritis, Heck has a vivid memory, undented by time.

He recalls every detail of a foggy morning on Shattuck Ave., between 38th and 39th Sts., when a horse and wagon turned suddenly in front of his car.

Unable to stop in time, he threw up his window and grabbed the driver, saving him from being killed with the horse.

"He told me, 'Now don't feel bad, you saved my life.' He had fallen asleep and pulled the wrong rein. Not only that, he went down and explained to Mr. Potter."

Heck was on his street car in Alameda when the earthquake struck in 1906 and remembers people running and their panic. He stayed with the car and tried to keep his passengers aboard as the safest place. And he went right on running the car.

"Why not, the tracks were all right."

Heck, who retired just before his 70th birthday in 1935, lives alone at 1603 16th St., San Pablo. He does his own housekeeping, including the cooking, washing and ironing and shopping. Until recently, he also kept his own garden. He even tried working in the shipyards during World War II, but found it a little too strenuous.

Klimax, who tops Heck by a few months to hold the record as the oldest man on the pension rolls, lives at 5700 Gravenstein Highway North in Sebastopol. According to district records, he worked as a car repairman from 1908 until 1938, when he was pensioned.

GOODBYE, HORSE—Electric trolleys of the Oakland Traction Company had already sent most horse cars to pasture when this photo was taken about 1907. J. A. Heck, one of AC Transit's oldest pensioners, worked on this line, which carried passengers from Santa Clara Ave. and High St. in Alameda to the old Oakland city hall.
Agencies Join Dispute Over PUC Control

AC Transit, along with cities and special districts throughout the state, has joined in efforts to nullify legislation which could give the State Public Utilities Commission control over public agencies.

At stake, they believe, is the destruction of home rule by elected officials of special districts, cities and counties and the granting of unlimited power to an appointive state commission.

Specifically involved is the fight of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority against legislation placing the MTA under the jurisdiction of the PUC with respect to safety rules.

The MTA, in asking the Supreme Court to review the law, maintains if the State Legislature has the power to give the PUC jurisdiction over safety rules, it has the power to do the same with rates, service and general operations.

And if the action against MTA sticks, public agencies fear similar moves could be made against all water, gas, electricity and transportation agencies.

MTA, in its fight, contends the PUC was clearly set up to control privately-operated utilities and that no legislative control was provided for public agencies which already are governed by the people themselves.

They contend in a petition filed with the Supreme Court that the legislation is unconstitutional and that the legislature does not have the power to give PUC control over public agencies.

Backing this view, in the East Bay, along with AC Transit, are the City of Alameda and the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

Veteran Directors

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took their oath of office preceding the January meeting. They are E. Guy Warren of Hayward, John McDonnell of Oakland and Bettencourt.

In taking over as president, Col. Copeland will be bringing to the office years of experience in organization and administration, experience credited with helping to get the District in operation and the perception to direct its continued advance.

A veteran of 30 years as an engineering officer, the new president has had world wide experience, including service in France and the Philippines, as well as various parts of the United States.

Elected to Office

A director at large, Copeland was an early advocate of better public transit as a necessary benefit, not only to the bus rider, but to the motorist, the businessman and the home owner. He is a member of the board of directors of the Stege Sanitary District and is a former director and president of the Kensington Improvement Club.

Coburn, director of Ward I, has been a board member since 1958 and was a valuable contributor to the planning of the transit program.

Active in civic and business affairs, he is past president of the Berkeley-Albany Bar Association and prominent in activities of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce.