Passengers Offered Free Riding with Novel Downtown Shop-a-Round Pass

A new transit pass which will offer downtown shoppers unlimited free riding during the middle of the day, will be introduced by AC Transit March 2 in downtown Oakland.

The special pass, believed by transit officials here to be the first of its kind in the nation, will be tried for four months. If it proves successful, the “Shop-a-Round Pass” could be introduced in other major shopping areas of the East Bay.

Although of prime interest to shoppers, the pass also can be used by downtown workers for business or luncheon trips. It also offers unlimited possibilities for visitors on recreational and social trips or persons keeping appointments.

Besides unlimited free riding in the central district between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., the pass will be good for the return bus trip home, provided it is used before the 3 p.m. deadline. Passes will be good only on the date sold.

Regular Fare

This is the way the plan will work:

Passengers will pay the regular inbound fare to reach the business district. Once downtown, the patron can buy the pass on any bus during the designated time period for 25 cents or a 20-cent AC Transit token. Youngsters from five through 16 can buy the pass for 10 cents. The pass thereafter is good for riding anywhere, on any bus, in the central area bounded by Jack London Square, Grove St., Grand Ave., and Lake Merritt and Fallon St.

For shoppers who drive downtown, rather than take the bus, they can park their cars only once and then buy a “Shop-a-Round Pass” for unlimited free bus travel about the central business and retail district. AC Transit operates 837 bus schedules through the area during the pass period.

Inexpensive Transit

The pass will be punched by operators each time it is used to prevent any confusion over date, boundaries or hours.

The plan was devised by W. E. Robinson, the district’s superintendent of scheduling, as a simple way of providing inexpensive business district transit without the extra operational expense and slower service of special shopper shuttle buses—which have proven unsuccessful here in the past.

General Manager K. F. Hensel said the plan is expected to pay its own way since no additional equipment will be required. Buses currently operate past 14th St. and Broadway, as an example, at an average frequency of 90 seconds providing fast service without waiting.

Passes will be sold Monday through Saturday and will be pink, with blue, green and black overprinting. They will feature a photo of Lake Merritt and the downtown Oakland skyline.
Bettencourt Named to Bay Commission

William J. Bettencourt of San Leandro, whose two-year term as president of the board of directors helped launch the district on its program of expansion and gains, has been appointed to represent AC Transit on the important Bay Area Transportation Study Commission.

William H. Colburn, Jr., of Berkeley, vice president of the board and another veteran transit leader, was named as alternate.

The 37-member commission has been set up by the State Legislature to study transportation problems affecting the Bay area and to prepare master regional transit plans, including ways and means of implementing their recommendations.

The commission also will study public agencies dealing with transportation and develop suggestions for possible reorganization or realignment of their responsibilities.

Bettencourt, a San Leandro business executive, stepped down in January, 1963, as president of the transit board, but remains as a director.

Express Line Extended
To Serve San Leandro

Additional commuters will receive limited stop service starting March 2 through extension of Express Line 34-MacArthur Blvd. from its 76th Ave. terminal to Estudillo Ave., in San Leandro during the peak hours.

With the extension, commuters using Lines 40 and 43 will no longer need to transfer to the express at 76th Ave.

Coinciding with the extension, frequency of operations on Lines 40 and 43 will be reduced, with one bus eliminated every two hours.

The adjustment, effective along the entire route, has resulted from a shift in intercity riding habits from the local lines to faster express service.

Another New Record

Drivers at the Emeryville division squeaked by their safety goal in January with 12,516 miles per accident, 66 miles over the “bogey” of 12,450. The operators beat all records in 1963 by topping the goal nine times and are out for an unbeatable record of 12 wins in 1964.

The Richmond division also got in on the coffee and doughnut treat in January with a record of 13,821 miles per accident.

Boosted by holiday shopping, passenger revenue moved back into its estimated pattern during December, showing a gain of 5.45 per cent over the same month a year ago. Total passenger revenue for December was $1,092,565.

The number of riders similarly showed a matching increase, with 4,505,138 riders carried during the month. Commute book sales were up 7 per cent, as compared to December, 1962, totaling $158,608. In comparison to December two years ago, commute sales increased 13.3 per cent.

Oakland department store sales picked up in the latter part of the month, showing an overall increase of 4 per cent for the four-week period ending December 28.

AC Transit's total income of $1,287,407 was sufficient to cover operating expenses of $1,064,009—up over 4 per cent—plus equipment renewal and bond debt service.

Miles of scheduled service were 1,920,482, an increase of 67,159 miles over December, 1962.
Automation Streamlines Bus Information

A new telephone system is giving information customers and employees the same streamlined service provided bus riders, with the district’s “trademark” of speed, directness, convenience.

Information calls, which have poured into switchboards at a rate reaching 2000 daily, are now being handled with increased efficiency through installation of a “Automatic Call Distributing System.”

First of its model in northern California and only the second one in the State, the new ACDS allows 2,000,000 residents in a 285 square mile area to make toll-free calls direct to the Transit Information bureau.

Calls for purposes other than bus information are handled through the customary switchboard with the number of 654-7878. In changing its antiquated telephone system, the district also added lines so employees are directly connected with other divisions and executive offices and can make inter-office or outside calls without switchboard assistance.

The ACDS by-passes the switchboard and deals out incoming calls to the first available attendant. If all are busy, the mechanical “brain box” stacks up calls in approximate order, gives the customer a recorded assurance after 20 seconds of waiting, and holds the calls for the first free clerk.

At the same time, the ACDS keeps a record of what’s going on—including the number of calls received and from where; the number of customers who find lines busy; the number who phone, wait and hang up. These statistics help in scheduling working hours and in determining efficiency of service, including whether bureau has a sufficient number of trunk lines.

A glance at the “control panel” also tells Zada Malinak, supervisor of PBX and Information, which operator is busy, which one is free. If the panel shows five or six calls waiting, then she “goes to work,” taking one of the positions to answer questions.

The system is set up so if a caller has to wait as long as 35 seconds, the switchboard operator cuts in to repeat a “live” announcement that lines are still busy.

The ACDS handles 26 trunk lines, serving the East Bay district and San Francisco. Seven operators, working over a 16 hour period, are able to handle all calls—quicker, easier and with less tension. They also are automatically notified where the call is coming from, so they will be prepared with “point of origin” knowledge.
Study Finds Hydrofoils Unpractical For Transbay Commuting Operations

An engineers study has ruled out the use of hydrofoil or other special water craft for practical transit purposes in crossing San Francisco Bay—at least for the time being. The report found the use of displacement craft in the bay "undesirable" because of high costs, crowded harbor conditions and uncertain weather—particularly fog.

Although transbay commuters presently are getting a better deal by sticking to district buses and the Bridge in crossing the Bay, the study recognized future developments might reduce costs to where water craft would be of transit value.

The report, made by the engineering firm of De Leuw, Cather & Company at the request of the district, found a water crossing would cost at least $1 per person, compared to current bus commute fares of 43 cents.

Total travel time by hydrofoil between Oakland and San Francisco was estimated at 31 minutes, including the trip to Jack London Square by bus from downtown Oakland, plus loading and unloading passengers from the craft.

The comparable trip by bus on the AC Transit "A" line takes 23 minutes.

Committees Named

Ray H. Rinehart, Piedmont certified public accountant who was named to the AC Transit board of directors last April, will serve during the coming year as chairman of the directors' finance committee.

Other directors who served as committee chairman last year and will continue in the same posts during 1964 include E. Guy Warren of Hayward, committee on project development, and William J. Betts court of San Leandro, committee on personnel and public relations.

IN MEMORIAM

Peter S. Clemens, 83, who entered service in 1911 and worked as a street car operator out of Central car house, died on January 10. Mr. Clemens lived at 1514 Havenscourt Blvd., Oakland, and was pensioned in 1945.

Also reported was the death of Sewell E. Berkheimer, 83, of 8 Chester Dr., East Northport, N.Y., a fellow street car operator, who went to work in 1919 and was pensioned in 1948. He died December 24.

James E. Cook, 75, of 3811 Ruby St., Oakland, former maintenance worker at the Oakland yards, died December 31. He went to work in 1922 and retired in 1953.

Martin J. Hughes, 60, former bus operator, who lived at 1428 Alice St., Oakland, died January 25. He went to work in 1927 and was pensioned in 1960.

Frequent fogs, movement of other vessels, the probable necessity of cautious operations in certain areas, could be expected to add to the time of a crossing and affect regularity of service, the engineers reported.

They found craft could not be expected to operate at more than 30 miles an hour, because of crowded conditions. To maintain a minimum schedule, three vessels would be needed, of a type which cruises at 32 miles an hour, carries 22 passengers and costs $132,000 each. Operating and maintenance expenses were estimated at $266,000 annually.

Hydrofoils, operating on a 16-minute headway, would be able to make 10 trips across the bay between the 4 p.m. and 6:24 p.m. peak hours, carrying a total of 220 people, according to the engineers. Line A buses, during the same period, currently make 14 trips, with a capacity of 714 riders.

It All Started With Guppies; Workers Now Share Trophy Honors

By Virginia Dennison

It seems like a long way between tropical fish and the skills of mechanic "A"—you don't know guppies.

It was the guppy, a tiny type of minnow which bears its young alive, that "hooked" two mechanics at the Seminary division into raising tropical fish.

For both, it's a family project, on their part, as well as that of the fish. It's also resulted in trophies, ribbons and inevitably, a lot of aquariums.

The fish, who range in size from one inch to three, might seem of odd contrast to Wayne R. West, of 1268 136th Ave., San Leandro, a tall, husky, ex-field service engineer from a construction equipment firm.

But West, mechanic in the Seminary body shop, has a strong feeling for family permanence, strong enough to give up a traveling job to go to work for AC Transit and also strong enough to abandon, as a profession, another specialty—cooking.

"This he does now just for fun—and lucky is his wife at dinner time. Wayne, his wife, Eleanor, and their two children, Randal, 13, and Carol, 11, became interested in tropical fish after Mrs. West bought some guppies.

They progressed from live bearing fish to egg-laying fish and additional varieties, including the colorful, fighting Siamese fish.

The West family, which concentrates now on improving strains, has 20 to 25 aquariums and "innumerable jars." They also have enough show ribbons "to paper a room" and a collection of trophies, added to recently by Mrs. West, who took three top prizes at the Eden Aquarium Society exhibit.

A fellow society member and past president, Lee Roy Bixler, veteran maintenance mechanic, and his wife, Ruby, of 2046 San Antonio Ave., Alameda, also were "captured" when they took care of a neighbor's guppies ten years ago.

They now have 50 tanks "running out of our ears," with fish swimming everywhere, except in the kitchen sink. They also have trophies and a rewarding common interest. Fish, it seems, are fun!
ACTIONS OF THE BOARD

At an adjourned regular meeting, January 22, 1964, the Board of Directors:
- Approved service adjustment on Lines 40 and 43, extension of Express Line 34 and inauguration of special service to United States Coast Guard Base on Government Island, on motion of Director Warren.
- Authorized experimental trial of special shopping pass in downtown Oakland, on motion of Director McDonnell.
- Declared intention of the Board that any adjustment in the compensation of the General Manager currently under consideration will be retroactive to January, 1964, on motion of Vice President Coburn.

At the regular meeting, February 12, 1964, the Board of Directors:
- Authorized district participation in regional meeting of American Transit Association in Los Angeles, April 5-8, on motion of Vice President Coburn.
- Approved construction of passenger shelter in Parchester Village, on motion of Director Berk.
- Appointed Director Bettencourt to represent District on Bay Area Transportation Commission, and Vice President Coburn to serve as alternate, on motion of Director Berk.

Bus Service Started To Coast Guard Base

Bus service to the U.S. Coast Guard Station on Government Island was inaugurated this month, giving the Alameda base its first public transportation since it was established 38 years ago.

By extending several schedules on the transbay Line A, recruits and station personnel are provided with direct service to Oakland and San Francisco.

Some 600 recruits are regularly assigned to the station, which is the recruit and reserve training center for the western half of the United States.

In addition to special week-end “liberty” service for the recruits, morning and evening trips were scheduled during the week for personnel regularly attached to the station.