30 More 'Transit Liners' On the Way; Last of Gasoline Buses Soon to Retire

Another 30 new motor coaches were ordered by AC Transit this month for East Bay service, taking advantage of a money-saving option which assures delivery of the buses at the same price offered in a bid last year.

The additional buses will bring the district's total fleet of new equipment to 340—more than half of the number of coaches operated.

Cost of the new buses will total approximately $810,000.

District directors voted to exercise an option with General Motors for purchase of the 30 new buses before a May 1 deadline, ordering both 51-passenger and 45-passenger coaches similar to the previous delivery. The coaches, because of their narrower width and maneuverability, have been especially suited for cross-town lines and for operation in congested areas, according to General Manager Kenneth F. Hensel.

Fifteen of the buses will be equipped with standard seats, and the remainder with a modified type of “bucket seat,” which will save the district $14,400 compared to the last order.

The buses, designed for local service, are expected to enable the district to retire the last of its inefficient, gasoline-powered motor coaches. The final 28 gas-driven “Macks” now in use on neighborhood lines and in special service, are due to be sent to pasture as soon as they can be replaced, bringing to an end the transit era of gas fumes and high maintenance costs.
Contra Costa Proposes Transit Study

AC Transit will assist in a proposed new engineering study on local transit service for central Contra Costa County.

Directors of the district have declined, however, to contribute any financial support for engineering fees outside of regular staff personnel.

The transit board was requested by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors to initiate a joint study with the Bay Area Rapid Transit District to determine local service needed and how it would be financed.

William H. Coburn, Jr., a director from Berkeley and vice president of the board, pointed out:

"We already are working with the rapid transit district on feeder bus service to its rail lines within our district, and we certainly can work with them in determining service needs for central Contra Costa County."

Coburn noted that an extensive study on proposed local transit service for central Contra Costa County was conducted in 1958 when that area was still a part of the AC Transit district.

The directors offered to make further copies of the 1958 report available to Contra Costa County officials, but declined to spend tax money on a new formal study, particularly since the area no longer is in the district.

Central Contra Costa County, including Orinda, Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Danville and Concord, originally were in the district when it was formed by the voters in 1956. But the area withdrew in 1959 upon the action of the city councils of Walnut Creek and Concord and the county board of supervisors.

The new study was initially proposed by the Contra Costa City-County Transit Advisory Committee in a letter to the supervisors last February. The supervisors in turn officially asked AC Transit and BARTD to make the study, promising full assistance of county personnel.

If I Had a Bus...

Third Graders Tell 'Dear People' Where They Want to Go--To Children's Fairyland

If you had an AC Transit bus and a route map of the East Bay, where would you want to go?

The district found some answers this month from third-grade students at the Columbus School in Berkeley.

No matter how they spelled it, it was "Children’s Fairyland" all the way, by a 19 to 6 majority.

The youngsters made their decisions known in letters sent to "Dear People at the AC Transit Company" after studying district route maps given them by their teacher, Mrs. Betty Selix.

They looked at the maps, made their choice and wrote their thanks, in 25 letters, accompanied by 25 drawings. One added extra thanks (three times!) and enclosed:

"Mrs. Selix let us talk while we were looking."

Like most of the others, she listed the "place I like to go is Children’s Fairyland. And I forgot to ask. How are you feeling today?"

The district, in an official reply from the directors, decided it was feeling very well indeed, after reading the letters and looking at the drawings, posted on the walls of the board room.

The drawings indicated that Children’s Fairyland was not the only place dreams come true. Double-decker buses—with a smiling face at every window—were in several drawings. Other drawings showed buses with a remarkable ability to hover over the land, submerge near the Berkeley fishing pier and survive an encounter with the "old woman in the shoe."

One youngster chose the fishing pier for his "ride"—with a pier-side bus of a size to match a waiting fish. Another picked University of California; one boy settled for the Alameda Naval Air Station, while a girl decided on the Naval Supply Center, complete with bus AND boat.

Unhampered by boundaries, one sports enthusiast left no doubt that however he got there, he wanted to see the Giants play.
Watch for the Driver With the Button—
He Plans to Put Driving Skill "on Line"

AC Transit drivers were wearing a "buttoned down" look this month, indicating—through a special lapel button—their intention of competing in the "Bus-O-Rama" driving skill contest.

Within a few days after sign-up blanks were made available, nearly half of the district's operators had picked up forms and a button to wear which announces: "I'll drive Bus-O-Rama."

The contest, which will determine the best "Driver of the Year," will be held on an obstacle course on the paved parking lot on 8th St., north of Youell Field.

Elimination trials will be held on May 9, 10 and 16 and the finals are scheduled for June 7. Wheeling around the course on that day will be the three top semifinalists from the three divisions—a field of nine all together.

Actual participants will receive shoulder patches to wear on their uniforms, featuring the outline of a bus and "Bus-O-Rama—1964," showing they demonstrated their ability, wheeling through simulated driving problems encountered in their regular work.

First, second and third place winners will receive individual trophies, to be engraved with name and record of the event.

In addition, a large gold bowl on a walnut base will be presented to the division represented by the "Driver of the Year," to serve as a perpetual memorial of victory.

The trophies will be on exhibit at the different divisions before the trials begin. A standard "500" series coach will be used for the contest, which is for sport as well as individual testing. No division records will be kept of the scores, but each driver will be given his own score sheet, so he'll know how he stacked up.

The drivers will take the bus through seven problems, simulated with barriers, rubber balls, stanchions and barrels. All will be problems encountered in street operations.

Smoothness of driving will be considered in the score and will be measured accurately by a decelerometer, instead of the tumbling cylinder test. The instrument, the same as that used to test the braking ability on district coaches, measures acceleration and deceleration.

 Contestants, in returning sign-up blanks to safety instructors, are asked to indicate when they prefer to compete. Drivers who normally work Saturday or Sunday will be given first priority on the course on contest days.

All drivers are eligible who have not had a "5 point" or more accident from March 1 until finals are completed.

The public will be invited to watch the contest, particularly the finals.

OVER THE BARREL—This will be one of the problems in the Bus-O-Rama contest, driving a bus zig-zag around barrels as a problem in overhang and clearance. This shows how much space a driver should allow in making turns in order for rear of coach to clear parked cars and obstacles.

Children Given Lessons in Safe Bus Riding As District Expands 'Class'

School children in Oakland and Berkeley were given instructions in how to ride public transportation safely this month as AC Transit expanded its "bus riding classes."

With Instructor Lloyd Weems as "teacher," the kindergarten classes, first graders and two special classes at Lincoln Elementary School in Berkeley had an all-day session to help them understand and use public facilities.

The experience for the five and six-year-olds included safety procedures worked out ahead of time and explained simply so the children could understand.

The "class" was continued in greater detail and in repeated sessions at the Whitman School for handicapped children, Oakland. There, because of physical difficulties, instruction was geared to abilities of each child, with special emphasis on safety.

For many of the Berkeley youngsters, it was their first time aboard a bus and an exciting experience.

They learned how to board a bus, how to pay their fare, how to take a seat near the door—and stay seated, how to "buzz" for their stop, and how to keep their seat until the coach stopped.

At suggestion of Lincoln School principal William B. Rhodes, the district plans to prepare a simple booklet illustrated by the young passengers—to help other students learn how to ride a bus safely and correctly.
Foreman Tries Skill With Prickly Plants

As a veteran maintenance foreman, you expect R. L. "Lee" Brushwiller to know all about "power plants," but not the prickly kind people call cactus.

Lee, day shift foreman at Richmond division, not only has well over 100 varieties of cactus plants, he probably holds some kind of a record for making the most of a dot-sized plot of garden space.

He has his display—spectacular in April, May and June—in a 10 by 10 foot area in front of his studio cottage at Brushwiller, dayshift maintenance foreman at Richmond division, has over 100 varieties of cactus plants, he probably holds some kind of a record for making the most of a dot-sized plot of garden space.

Intrigued by the beauty of blooms on the thorniest of plants, Brushwiller started collecting varieties—and building shelves and racks to hold colored porcelain containers, stacked in rows on his tiny, white-rock plot.

One box, four feet long, greeted April with 250 buds of varicolored flowers—a small inkling of what Brushwiller sees when he looks out of his front window.

Lee keeps most of his plants outside, with the exception of a rare type like the "Turkish Temple" from Africa, which is getting accustomed to Berkeley climate from an indoors location. It resembles a football, with an orchid-like flower growing from the pointed end—but is nothing to kick around any nearby stadium.

With all that bloom about to burst forth, he's concentrating now on grafting cactus and trying to grow some of his own from "pups"—that's what they call them! His only problem—where to put them?

Transit Veteran Retires

One of the "old-timers" in East Bay transportation, Homer S. Haney, 68, of 538 Glen View Ave., Oakland, will retire May 1, after 38 years "in transit."

Haney went to work in 1926 as a street car conductor, switched a short time later to trains and worked as a brakeman and trainman until 1958, when he became a motor coach operator.

February was a banner month on AC Transit ledgers, with passenger revenue hitting $1,022,119, the first time it has passed the million dollar mark in the month of February since 1953.

Number of riders carried also showed a healthy increase, as did commute book sales.

Revenue for the month topped the figure for last year by $71,430—an increase of 7.51 per cent. Size of the increase was attributed partly to the extra leap-year work day and to favorable weather. But even without the extra day, revenues would have shown a gain over last year of 5.2 per cent.

The number of riders carried during the month totaled 4,323,521, an increase of 6.24 per cent over the same month in 1963. Commute book sales for February were $166,917, as compared to $156,341 in February, 1963, an increase of 6.8 per cent.

The transit industry nationally also showed an up trend during the month, with a 2.88 per cent increase in revenue passengers.

AC Transit operated 1,821,966 miles of scheduled service, an increase of 7 per cent over the same month last year.
ACTIONS OF THE BOARD

At an adjourned regular meeting March 25, 1964, the Board of Directors:

• Authorized sale of a portion of land at Richmond division terminal to City of Richmond for amount of $8984, on motion of Vice President Coburn.
• Ratified travel outside the State by claims department attorney, on motion of Director Warren.
• Approved purchase of 30 new buses, a spare engine assembly, auto and truck replacements, and authorized installation of heating facilities at district maintenance shops, on motion of Director Rinehart.

* * *

At an adjourned regular meeting, April 15, 1964, the Board of Directors:

• Authorized extension of self-insurance program to include robbery exposure, and approved continuation of existing insurance program regarding personal effects of bus operators, on motion of Vice President Coburn.
• Approved a general program of service adjustment to more closely coordinate operations of the district with service demands, on motion of Vice President Coburn.
• Authorized President of Board of Directors to represent District at regional conference of American Society of Civil Engineers at Salt Lake City, on motion of Director McDonnell.

Richmond Operators Top Goal for Third Month

Richmond operators could wear a round and pleased look this month—after topping their safety goal for the third month in a row. The operators tallied 13,872 miles per accident in March, surpassing the district's goal of 12,450 miles per accident and winning more coffee and doughnuts.