Contract Awarded for Installing Mobile Two-Way Radio System to Link Coaches

The District's long determination to equip its buses with a "voice" moved toward actual work stages this month with award of a contract for installing a two-way radio communications system.

The contract, to link the basic fleet of 300 coaches, was awarded to Radio Corporation of America, lowest of three bidders.

RCA is to supply and install a complete mobile radio communications system, with the exception of setting up the mobile bus units. The District will handle installation of the telephone-like equipment on buses.

With the two-way radio network, the District will have an instant check on the location of each equipped coach and will be able to change routings or operations according to traffic conditions — including those involved in future rapid transit feeder bus services.

The radio link also is expected to be of particular benefit in meeting emergency situations.

RCA's basic bid was for $174,534, with extra mobile accessories, portable transceivers and test equipment totaling out to $185,063. To be added are sales taxes, labor of installation, engineering and consultant fees.

The project includes erection of a new base station, for a transmitter, on Round Top mountain, and another base station, for a receiver, on Grizzly Peak. The present station on Round Top will be moved to Emeryville Division, to be set up for standby purposes.

A new console also will be installed at Central Dispatch.

A capital grant from the U.S. Housing and Home Finance Agency will cover part of the projected cost of $269,000. The grant initially is for half of actual costs, up to $134,500. It can be increased to $179,333 if regional planning is completed within three years.
A favorable increase in passenger revenue was recorded during April, with a total of $1,187,368 collected for the month — up $100,712 or 9.3 per cent over the $1,086,656 figure tallied during the same month last year.

John F. Larson, treasurer-controller, attributed 5.9 per cent of the increase to the recent fare raise, and 3.4 per cent to a boost in patronage.

The number of passengers carried on East Bay and transbay lines reached 4,455,622, a gain of 150,737 over riders carried during the same period a year ago. On transbay service, the percentage gain was 5 per cent, with a total of 950,969 customers, an increase of 44,991. East Bay passengers reached 3,504,653, a boost of 105,746 riders or 3.1 per cent over April, 1965.

A surplus of $78,169 or 6.8 per cent over year-ago expenses of $1,147,238.

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Information sessions were held this month among drivers and office workers to explain functions of the newly formed AC Transit Employees Federal Credit Union. The credit union, recently chartered, has established offices at 2708 Flannery Dr., San Pablo. Payroll deductions have been approved by the District and by Division 192 of the Carmen’s Union.

Credit Union Formed by AC Transit Workers

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Films Show Key to Courteous Service

The importance of courtesy and thoughtfulness — and their relationship in attracting and keeping customers — was emphasized this month in two color films, which combined entertaining acting with significant messages.

One film, scheduled for bus drivers, highlights their importance as AC Transit “salesmen” — the only representatives of the District who meet customers face to face and, through their actions, win or lose patrons.

The other film was presented for those who deal over the phone with customers or potential customers. It illustrated simple, good telephone manners:

“Telephone as you’d like to be telephoned to.”

Sales Talk

The first film, produced by General Motors, shows the “Salesman at the Wheel!” in his “office” — the bus — and how, despite many problems, he can handle many situations with three responses:

“Thank you.” “Please.” “I’m sorry.”

The film illustrated the importance of a neat, personal appearance and well maintained vehicle and the effects of a bad mood, compared to the “smile that goes a long way.”

It suggested ways to handle problem situations, such as a customer who neglects to pay a fare. The suggested comment was:

“I beg your pardon. I failed to get your fare.”

As to the overdue transfer, this was the suggestion:

“I’m sorry, sir, this transfer has expired. Will you see if you have another in your pocket?”

The film suggests that operators learn about the services offered by the property and “bone-up” on the territory served, to be more informative to their customers.

“If you help your company to be admired,” it was pointed out, “you personally gain in stature.”

It also added it was the salesman who keeps a company in business and in transportation, it’s the driver who sells the service.

After seeing the film, operators took part in a courtesy quiz, which included their suggestions on how to improve driver courtesy.

The telephone presentation, made by Miss Alene Parker, service consultant for Pacific Telephone, had these points:

- Pick up phone promptly and be prepared to talk.
- Identify yourself by name or department or both.
- If away from desk, arrange for someone to answer phone.
- Don’t ask “Who’s calling?” Instead, if necessary, ask: “May I tell Mr. Brown who is calling?”

The film suggested calls should be placed by executives personally, rather than by secretaries. It also included tips on holding calls and having them transferred.

Counting Room

Tally from Fare Boxes
Gives Passenger Revenue

If the jingle of coins has a musical sound and the clatter of cash is euphonic, the counting room of AC Transit would have appeal.

The “boiler room” of district operations — and the cash register — the counting room is a noisy hideaway where the all-important questions are determined:

What is the passenger revenue — total, and by line?

Tickets, tokens, and cash are dumped each day into the counting room to be processed and tallied, under a system established when fare boxes were changed in 1949.

In the early days of Key System operation, revenue was counted at the car barns and at the terminal pier. Later, the receipts were turned in at the Oakland yard and at the car houses or coach headquarters.

But the old “J” boxes and the Ohmer fare registers on transbay buses and trains were unsatisfactory, and after World War II the switch was made to Cleveland boxes, which will take any type of coin or tickets.

The counting room is under the personal jurisdiction of W. G. Skilling, assistant treasurer and veteran of 37 years of service. Supervising activities is Arthur Spiganovick, cashier.

Under the present system, operators are issued a relatively small amount of cash; plus a stock of tickets and tokens which are charged against their individual accounts — much like consignments to salesmen.

When the contents of fare boxes are brought into the counting room, they are emptied — a line at a time — into a shaker, which holds back tickets and currency in a hopper while the coins and tokens rattle through into a bucket.

Although all sorts of containers have been tried, incidentally, the best remains the old-fashioned coal bucket — a noisy receptacle, but efficiently adaptable for coin catching.

The tickets are weighed on an offset scale to obtain what experience has found to be a highly accurate count of their contribution to revenue and riding. Coins are counted in sorting machines, which separate the collection into groups of tokens, dimes, pennies, nickels, and quarters.

After a check for “foreign and phony” money, the coins are moved to rolling machines. All tokens are rolled to be sold again. Change of different denominations also are rolled to fill orders from each division. And the rest goes to the bank.

It takes a crew of 8 to handle the deafening job. In an average month, over 1,500,000 tokens and 3,600,000 coins are sorted and counted; the tokens are rolled, along with 1,900,000 coins for change requirements. Approximately 1,700,000 coins are bagged for banking.
It's a Costly Hobby—But Operator Finds Chinchillas Make Intriguing Companions

There's something cuddly and expensive in the life of Marion C. Elsbury, 37, bus driver at Seminary Division, that takes a lot of pampering. But if you like animals, you'll like chinchillas and understand why they're an enthralling part of his leisure.

"I enjoy raising them as a hobby," Elsbury explained. "Just don't expect to get rich."

Owner of a "herd" of about 30 of the small, South African rodents, Elsbury moved into the furry field in 1963, a short time after he went to work for AC Transit. For Thanksgiving that year, he and his wife acquired two pair of "chins" from a friend.

SWEET — AND EXPENSIVE — Operator Marion C. Elsbury cuddles two of his pets, part of the "herd" of chinchillas he raises as a hobby—"but not to get rich."

By paying cash—a whopping $2200—they received the bonus of another two pair and started their ranch in the garage of their home at Dublin.

Elsbury found the animals "just like kids or anybody else. You have to pamper them a little, talk to them, chip to them. It takes time, patience and care to raise chinchillas, but it's real exciting. They're delicate and you try not to get them upset."

The animals have three litters a year—you hope—according to Elsbury. Three babies is an average litter.

Little Care

The animals are kept in cages, fed a combination of special chinchilla pellets and a grain hay designed to improve the quality of their fur.

Since he and his wife moved to their present home at 1249 Via Vista, San Lorenzo, Elsbury has had to board his herd at a ranch in Danville, but hopes somehow "to get them back home."

As for making a living from the animals, Elsbury figures a person would have to have a herd including at least 150 female chinchillas.

A good pelt brings $40 to $50, with the average around $30, he explains. Since his start, he has lost six animals and "pelted out four, at $17.50 each."

"The pelts are sent to a fur auction in New York for processing, at $2.50 a pelt, so you can see I'm not getting rich," the operator explained.

He's trying now to improve the blood line for better quality and to make up for his "biggest disappointment."

He left an excellent book on chinchilla care on the bus and although it was marked with his name and address, it has not so far been returned. "That was a real loss!"

Visiting Students Learn About Buses

Despite a couple of mishaps, the Special Education Class from Capay School at Orland got to see AC Transit's new Freeway Train this month as a highlight of a first visit "to the city."

The Glenn County youngsters were one of two groups to find considerable interest in district operations. Boys from industrial arts classes at Anderson Valley High School in Mendocino County could hardly be pried away from the machine shop, where they showed keen interest in maintenance, repairs—and future jobs.

The Orland students had made plans to see the articulated bus at the Transbay Transit Terminal, but switched programs when a transmission problem sent the duo-bus to the shops in Emeryville.

Caught in peak-hour traffic in private cars, the visitors were unable to change lanes on the Eastshore in time for the Emeryville turn-off. Undaunted, they drove back from Richmond to find the shops closed, but Anthony Perry, Sr., maintenance foreman on the swing shift, waiting to show them the bus.

After an enthused tour of the Freeway Train, the students rode around the yard on a bus and then went through the wash rack—a "real thrill."

When they left, even the girls were determined to be "bus mechanics," according to Perry.

Welcome in Order for New Transit Workers

New District workers include:

Emeryville Division

Maintenance: Gary E. Meydam, 3541 Davis St., Oakland, service employee.


Severn Division

Bus Operators: P. R. Bohannon, 1417 Pacific Ave., San Leandro; T. R. Murphy, 29934 Lauderdale Ave., Hayward; D. W. Thomas, 1500-164th Ave., San Leandro; D. M. Pinkard, 849-70th Ave., Hersey Harris, 1270-90th Ave., C. E. Grimes, 7129 Weld St., all of Oakland, and D. D. Sinclair, 2199 Bancroft Ave., San Leandro.

In Memoriam

LYMAN L. DEADRICK, 65, early day street car operator at Telegraph and Central car barns before he became a bus driver in 1948, died on May 8 in Didsbury, Alberta, Canada, where he was making his home. He retired on June 1, 1960.
At an adjourned regular meeting May 25, the Board of Directors:
• Awarded contract to Radio Corporation of America for furnishing and installing mobile radio communications system, on motion of Vice President McDonnell. (Story, Page 1).
• Ratified program of deferred compensation for General Manager, on motion of Director Copeland.

* * *

At the regular meeting June 8, the Board of Directors:
• Authorized execution of a contract with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for capital grant to purchase 30 new buses, on motion of Vice President McDonnell.

Sharper Service Scheduled for Riders

Changes affecting transbay service and operations in nine East Bay cities were put into effect this month.

Improvements included start of Sunday service to the Mormon Temple and Greek Orthodox Church. Midday transportation also was inaugurated between San Lorenzo, Southland and Chabot College in Hayward.

Additional transbay trips were added to Lines F, L and R, providing more service for commuters in Berkeley, Richmond, El Cerrito, Oakland, San Leandro and Hayward.

A new area of San Pablo was served by rerouting buses to Contra Costa College.

Frequency changes affected riders using Lines 40, 57 and 78, while minor time adjustments were made to Lines 11, 69 and transbay Line O.

New Fun Pass Record

Sales of Sunday and holiday fun passes reached 1,727 on June 5, highest record yet. Closest tally, on a regular Sunday, was made Aug. 1, 1965, when 1,688 passes were sold. During airport dedication Sept. 16, 1962, some 1,721 passes were sold on regular and special buses.